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STORY
OF THE
SOUDAN WAR.

*From the Rise of the Revolt July, 1881, to the Fall
of Khartoum and Death of Gordon, Jan., 1885.*

BY
W. MELVILLE PIMBLETT.

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INDEX.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

Gathering of the Storm—The Mahdi : His Mission—England and Egyptian Finances—The Dual Control—Jealousy of the Notables—Arabi Bey—The Crisis—Arabi Dismissed—Recall of Arabi—Riot at Alexandria—Defiance—Firm Attitude of the British—The French Retiring—Commencement of Hostilities—Arabi in Rebellion—Arrival of British Reinforcements—Fighting in Egypt—End of the Revolt—Disbanding of the Egyptian Army—British Army of Occupation 1

CHAPTER II.

Storm Clouds Again—The Mahdi in Arms—Spread of the Soudan Rebellion—Defeat of Egyptian Troops—Army Reforms—Colonel Stewart's Mission to Khartoum—Projected Relief of Soudan Garrisons—Brighter Prospects—Confidence of the British Government—Mr. Gladstone Disowns Responsibility 12

CHAPTER III.

Colonel Stewart at Khartoum—The Fire Still Burning—Causes of the Revolt—Oppression of the People—The Slave Trade—Arab Manner of Fighting—Dervishes—Intentions of the Mahdi—Abdul Kader's Mission—Continued Spread of the Rebellion—Another Egyptian Defeat—Capture of El Obeid—Triumph of the False Prophet 18

CHAPTER IV.

PAGE

Appointment of Colonel Hicks—Intensified Alarm in Egypt — Earl Dufferin's Advice—Reinforcements for the Besieged Garrisons—Hicks's Victory over the Mahdi —Submission of Chiefs—Hicks Pasha Commander-in- Chief—The British Government still Disclaim Responsi- bility—Money and Provisions Wanted—Note from the Khedive	26
--	----

CHAPTER V.

Threatened Bankruptcy—Hicks Pasha again Leaves Khar- toun—Doubts and Difficulties of the General—Full Powers—Despairing Communication—The Sheep go Down to the Slaughter—March on the Mahdi's Strong- hold	35
--	----

CHAPTER VI.

An Ominous Silence—Fears in England and Egypt—Defeat of the False Prophet—Another Cloud—Renewed Sus- pense—Whisperings of Calamity—The Worst Doubts Confirmed—Hicks' Force Annihilated—The General and his Staff Killed—Terrible Slaughter near El Obeid— Rejoicings of the Rebels—Graphic Details—Panic in Egypt	46
---	----

CHAPTER VII.

Ever-increasing Troubles—Rising in the Eastern Soudan— Osman Digna—Defeat of the Rebels—Victory of Osman —The British Consul Killed—Disaffection Among the Tribes—Depredations near Suakim—Another Defeat of the Egyptians—Tokar and Sinkat in Peril—Grave Posi- tion of Affairs—The British Army of Occupation—Baker Pasha—New Army Constituted from the Gendarmerie— Critical Situation	54
--	----

CHAPTER VIII.

Proposed Relief of Tokar and Sinkat—The Soudan and Its Abandonment—Resignation of the Egyptian Ministry— England still Powerful—Awful Straits of the Garrisons —Baker Pasha's Army on the March—Desperate	
--	--

INDEX.

iii

Onslaught by the Arabs—Rout of the Egyptians, with Great Loss—Cowardice—Flight to Suakim . . .	PAGE 62
---	------------

CHAPTER IX.

British Preparations for War—Concentration of Troops— Rebels Around Suakim—Projected Relief of Tokar— The British Commander—State of the Country—The Rebels still Fearless—Reports by Spies—Fall of Sinkat— Awful Scenes—Terrible Massacre—Tewfik's Bravery— Alarming Intelligence—Surrender of Tokar—Suspected Treachery—Landing of the British . . .	72
--	----

CHAPTER X.

El Teb—Night before the Battle—Formation of the British —Sickening Scenes—Description of the Conflict: Des- perate Resistance of the Arabs—Personal Encounters— Exciting Events—Barbarity of the Enemy—British Pluck—The Enemy Routed—Evidence of Arab Prisoners —Losses on Both Sides . . .	80
---	----

CHAPTER XI.

The Arabs again Collecting—British Advance on Tokar— View of the Enemy—Dubbah Occupied—Trophies of War Discovered—Arabs Coming In—Proclamation by General Graham and Admiral Hewett—Address to the Troops—Return to Trinkitat—Preparations for Another Battle—The Rebels Sighted—Constitution of the British Force—Battle of Tamasi—Fearful Onslaught of the Rebels—The British Wavering—Great Slaughter—Lost Ground Recovered—Defeat of Osman—His Camp Fired —The Killed and Wounded—The Expeditionary Force Recalled . . .	90
--	----

CHAPTER XII.

Khartoum Again—Painful Reflections—Spread of the Rebel- lion—Alarming Situation—Relief Prayed For—Prepa- rations for Evacuation—The Telegraphic Communication Cut Off—Mr. Power's Self-abnegation—Further Ad- vance of the Mahdi—Khartoum Described—The Soudan Desert: Its Sterility—The Nile—Solitude and Desola- tion—Korosko—Abu Ahmed—Berber—Shendy . . .	101
---	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

PAGE

- Gordon !—Interview at Southampton—Gordon and the Congo
 —His Opinion of the Soudan and the Mahdi—Difficulties
 of Evacuation—Summoned to London—Appointment to
 Relieve the Soudan Garrisons—Colonel Stewart to be
 Gordon's Companion—The Start—En Route to the
 Soudan—Instructions to Gordon—The General's Memo-
 randum—Remarks by Colonel Stewart—Arrival at Cairo
 —Firman from the Khedive—Gordon's Appointment
 Commended 110

CHAPTER XIV.

- Career of Charles George Gordon : His Birth—At School—
 Military Training—In the Crimea—With the British in
 China—In Command of the Chinese—Brilliant Exploits
 —Honours—Gordon's Religious Enthusiasm—Death no
 Fears—"The Ever-Victorious Army"—Trials in the
 Soudan—Governor-General—Despair—Hunting Slave-
 dealers—Gordon's Achievements—Return to England . 126

CHAPTER XV.

- Gordon and Stewart Alone—Arrival at Abu Hamed—"Hope-
 ful of Success"—The General's Plan of Action—Military
 Aid not Necessary—At Berber—Council of Notables
 Elected—Confidence—Entry into Khartoum—Great
 Rejoicings—Active Operations—The Deliverer at Work
 —Release of the Oppressed—Mahdi Proclaimed Ruler of
 Kordofan—Proclamation on the Slave Trade—Constern-
 ation in England—Gordon proposes Zebehr Pasha as
 his Successor to Governor-Generalship—Indignation—
 Arguments For and Against Zebehr 137

CHAPTER XVI.

- Gordon's Acts of Mercy and of Grace—"Holding the Balance
 Even"—Clearing the Augean Stable—The Governor
 Sangrune—Activity of the Mahdi's Agents—Proposal to
 "Smash" the Mahdi—Warnings to the Soudini—Evacua-
 tion Possible—Despatch to the False Prophet—Indig-
 nant Reply of Mohammed Ahmed—Gordon Invited to
 Become a Dervish—Colonel Stewart's Reconnaissance—

INDEX.

	PAGE
Failure of Gordon's Mission—Khartoum Surrounded—	
“Caught at Khartoum”—Hoping against Hope—No	
Quarrel with Zebehr—No Chance for the Garrisons—	
Gloomy Forebodings	149

CHAPTER XVII.

Why the Government did not Commission Zebehr—Gordon still Appeals for Zebehr—Relief of Halfiyeh—Hostilities Begun—Imposing Array of Rebels—Capture by the Arabs—Refugees at Khartoum—Rejoicings in the City—Defeat of Gordon's Soldiers—Treachery in the Camp—Exciting Narrative—Regrets—Two Pashas Court-Martialled and Shot—Faith in Gordon Unabated—Proofs of Confidence—Gratifying Events	162
---	-----

CHAPTER XVIII.

Not Abandoned?—Isolated at Khartoum—Resisting the Enemy—Improved Defences—Gordon still Defiant—Wonderful Resources—Dark Days—Rebellion in the City—Bashi-Bazouks Disarmed—Reported Advance of the British—Renewed Hope—Again Despair—Sustained Firing—The Rebel Losses—Gordon's Faith in Heaven—“Nothing but God's Mercy”—No British Troops—Measures for Evacuation—Escape not Possible without Dishonour—Safe in Khartoum—Turkish Soldiers—Why British Troops were not Despatched—“The Situation is Desperate”—The “Indelible Disgrace” Telegram	175
---	-----

CHAPTER XIX.

The “Rescue” of Gordon Demanded—Votes of Censure—Excitement in the Country—Allegations of Parsimony and Cowardice—Proposed Volunteer Expedition to Khartoum—Chaos at Berber—Fears of the Governor—Massacre of Refugees—Shendy Invested—Touching Appeal from Berber—An Egyptian Expedition Cancelled—No Help for Berber—Threatened Resignation of Nubar Pasha—The Mahdi Demands Submission—Troops Ordered to Assouan—Conflicting Reports—Alarming Intelligence—Rumoured Fall of Khartoum and Capture of Gordon—The Rebels in Berber: Consequences	188
--	-----

CHAPTER XX.

PAGE

- Dongola—The Mudir, Mustapha Bey—Loyalty of the Dongo-
lese—Graphic Description of the Governor—Reports from
the Desert—Revolt at Debbah—The Egyptian Government
Command a Retreat—Rout of the Mahdists—The Mudir
Invaluable—Reinforcements Asked for—Victory at
Marawi—A Unique Despatch—News from Khartoum—
Suspensions of the Mudir—A Ludicrous Blunder . 201

CHAPTER XXI.

- The British Government and Khartoum—Vote of Credit—
Movement of Troops in Egypt—General Stephenson—
Proceedings in Parliament—Relief Expedition Decided
Upon—Messages from Gordon—Routes to Khartoum
—Lord Wolseley to Command the Expeditionary Force
—Instructions to his Lordship—Advance of the British
—Fighting at Khartoum—News from the City—Gordon
still Alive 215

CHAPTER XXII.

- Life at Khartoum—Gordon's Engines of Destruction—Rising
of the Nile—Operations at Messelemiah—Victory by
the Mahdists—"Arts of Peace"—Dearth of Money—
Medals Struck—Colonel Stewart Wounded—Hope
Abandoned—Cowardice—Gordon's Armed Steamers—
Successes on the Blue Nile—Senaar—Scathing Letter
—Another Message from Gordon—Despairing Cry—
British Troops and Zebehr again Asked for—"On
Tenter-hooks of Anxiety"—Weary of Delay—Colonel
Stewart Leaves Khartoum—Shendy and Berber Attacked
—Massacre of Stewart's Party 228

CHAPTER XXIII.

- Lord Wolseley's Address to the Troops—The Advance—
Arrival at Korti—The Commander-in-Chief's Disposi-
tions—The Two Columns—Hazardous Undertakings—
"Khartoum All Right"—Dash Across the Desert—
Gakdul Wells—Battle of Abu Klea—Colonel Burnaby
Killed—Fierceness of the Arabs—Reckless Bravery—
Gallant Stand—Losses—Fatigues—The Enemy Again

INDEX.

vii

Sighted — More Fighting — General Stewart Shot —	PAGE
Death or Victory—Retreat of the Arabs—The Nile—	
Metammeh—Gubat	243

CHAPTER XXIV.

Shendy—Sir Charles Wilson Starts for Khartoum—The	
Steamers—Grounding of the <i>Bordein</i> —Direful News—	
Running the Gauntlet—Dismay—Fall of Khartoum—	
Scenes in the City—Arab Rejoicings—Gallantry of the	
British—Honourable Retreat—Race for Abu Kru—	
Wreck of the Steamer <i>Tall-Howeiya</i> —Letter from the	
Mahdi—Surrender Demanded—A Clever Ruse—Loss	
of the <i>Bordein</i> —Pitiable Situation—Refuge upon an	
Island—Lieutenant Wortley's Adventure—"Too Late"	
—Dismay in the British Camp—Lord Charles Beres-	
ford to the Rescue—Alarming Incident—England and	
the Fall of Khartoum—National Sorrow—Doubts—	
How Gordon Fell—Conclusion	259

PREFACE.

HAD any man dared to predict in the autumn of the year 1882, when the rebellion instigated by Arabi Pasha had been crushed effectually at Tel-el-Kebir, that eighteen months afterwards British troops would be actively engaged in another part of Egyptian territory, he would have been scouted as an idle dreamer; had he ventured further, and said that two years hence the flower of the British Army would be fighting unceasingly against Time and the tremendous difficulties and varied perils incident to a river voyage along the great Nile Valley, with an objective two thousand miles distant from Cairo, the world would have pitied him as one demented. Yet how literally would the prophecy have been fulfilled! We are too apt to forget that the unlikely is always happening, and that, poor ignorant creatures as we are, we cannot imagine what surprises the morrow will bring in its train. The English Government believed that in stifling the military rising in Egypt proper they were removing the one danger that threatened our interests in that country. They knew not of the sore that was festering elsewhere, nor of the operation that would be essential to its cure. Providing they had been aware of the seriousness of the disease, of the tenacity with which it had laid hold on the system, they could not have realised how weak was

the body to be relieved of the visitation. As a fact, the frame was too reduced to bear the strain when palliatives were applied. It was utterly inadequate to withstand the shock of a vigorous endeavour to uproot the seat of the evil; hence the process of galvanisation, the application of extraordinary remedies, of extraneous aid. This assistance England supplied, and dearly has she paid for her interference. It cannot be said that, all things considered, the interference was unjustifiable, though had a correct estimate of the outlay been made, she would certainly have paused ere she committed herself to the bargain.

However, we must not stray on to debatable ground. On the contrary, we would, while relating events in their natural sequence, cling severely to none save a dispassionate course. This, and this alone, is the spirit which has animated the production of the "Story of the Soudan War." The sole desire has been to produce a faithful reflex of occurrences from the outbreak of the Soudan rebellion in July, 1881, to the fall of Khartoum in January, 1885. And, to ensure reliability, official documents have, where possible, been consulted. No statements of party have been accepted, because, however anxious one is to present "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," the lode-stone of bias too often weighs in the scale even when one would carefully eschew it.

Fortunately, the opportunities for consulting unimpeachable authority have not been few. To the compiler of this volume they have been many, his principal occupation bringing him in contact, hourly, with facilities denied, perhaps, to the majority in the land. That he has not been slow to profit thereby will, he confidently anticipates, be the verdict of those to whom he appeals.

But apart from the special interest the Soudan rebellion possesses for the nation by reason of the actions of the British military and naval forces, a thousandfold has that interest been heightened through the commission entrusted

to General Gordon. His piety, his nobility of soul, his chivalry, his bravery, his utter and complete abandonment of self for the benefit of suffering humanity, had, long before he undertook to proceed to Khartoum on the 19th January, 1884, endowed him with an individuality rarely indeed met with in any age. But much as the peoples of the earth, civilised and uncivilised, knew of Gordon the Christian Warrior, they were unaware, comparatively, of his matchless virtues and his enduring courage until Khartoum was hemmed in, and besieged for a period extending to well-nigh twelve months. If nothing had been known of this brilliant genius prior to that memorable siege, his unwavering devotion to the interests of those by whom he was surrounded, hundreds of whom struggled constantly to kiss his very feet, would have thrown around his name a halo of imperishable glory. He it was who constituted for us the central figure in the Soudan, who lent to British interference a spell the nation could not, and would not if it could, conquer, and whose death reduced a nation to tears. Such an one had Byron in his mind when he wrote —

“ Oh friend ! for ever loved, for ever dear !
What fruitless tears have bathed thy honour'd bier !
What sighs re-echoed to thy parting breath
Whilst thou wast struggling in the pangs of death !
Could tears retard the tyrant in his course ;
Could sighs avert his dart's relentless force,
Could youth and virtue claim a short delay,
Or beauty charm the spectre from his prey :
Thou still hadst liv'd to bless our aching sight—
Thy comrade's honour and thy friends' delight.”

To conclude this brief introduction, it will be found, we venture to say, that everything of importance has been mentioned:—The outbreak of the rebellion, its spread in Kordofan, Senaar, and Darfur, the official reports upon it, the attempts of Abdel-Kader to subdue it, the vain endeavours of Hicks Pasha, the total annihilation of his army, the march of the rebels on Khartoum, the siege south of the city, the rise and progress of the revolt in

the Eastern Soudan, the defeat of the Egyptians in the Red Sea littoral, the dispersal of Osman Digna's levies by the British, the withdrawal of the English troops, the appointment of General Gordon, his journey to Khartoum, his reception and life there, the investment of the city, Gordon's wonderful services in and around the capital of the Soudan, the massacre of Colonel Stewart, Mr. Frank Power, and their companions on the steamer *Abbas*; the constitution and journeyings of the Khartoum Relief Expedition under Lord Wolseley, the battles in the desert, the adventures between Metammeh and Khartoum, the rescue by Lord Charles Beresford, the fall of Khartoum and death of the heroic Gordon, the Government instructions and despatches generally—all these, with other matters, have been dealt with in more or less detail.

We would again express the hope that the volume will prove acceptable to the public, and that in its pages will be recognised an unaffected attempt to meet a general want, namely, the Story of the Soudan War in a connected form.

W. M. P.

April 19th, 1885.

CHAPTER I.

GATHERING OF THE STORM—THE MAHDI : HIS MISSION—
ENGLAND AND EGYPTIAN FINANCES—THE DUAL CON-
TROL—JEALOUSY OF THE NOTABLES—ARABI BEY—
THE CRISIS—ARABI DISMISSED—RECALL OF ARABI—
RIOT AT ALEXANDRIA—DEFIANCE—FIRM ATTITUDE
OF THE BRITISH—THE FRENCH RETIRING—COM-
MENCEMENT OF HOSTILITIES—ARABI IN REBELLION—
ARRIVAL OF BRITISH REINFORCEMENTS—FIGHTING IN
EGYPT—END OF THE REVOLT—DISBANDING OF THE
EGYPTIAN ARMY—BRITISH ARMY OF OCCUPATION.

ONLY a Dongolian—once a poor boat-builder, destined to rise by mere pretensions to a unique position—the head of thousands and tens of thousands of fanatical Arabs, members of the various tribes in the province wherein he was born—the great, far-reaching Soudan, the leader of the wild men of Kordofan and Nubia—a man who caused hordes to tremble at his very word; the originator of endless troubles to England and Egypt; the foundation of an expenditure of millions of money and the loss of well-nigh 20,000 lives. Only a Dongolian, yet a mighty power!

Born in 1845 upon the shores of the rolling Nile, where, strange to say, the tide of the rebellion he instigated nearly forty years afterwards was stemmed by a fellow-

Dongolese, faithful among the faithless, Mahmond Ahmed migrated with his father, a carpenter, to Shendy, also upon the Nile; where, having been apprenticed to a boat-builder, he decamped to Khartoum, whence he re-passed Shendy and proceeded to Berber, in order to undergo a religious training. Adopting the life of a dervish, he retired to a village south of Kana, on the White Nile; and having attained to the dignity of a sheikh, retired to the solitude of a cave for six years, obtaining thereby an odour of sanctity over the whole country. In time Mohammed became wealthy, was not indifferent to the charms of women; many of whom, heiresses to fortune, he married. A keen eye to business had Mohammed, even in his retirement. Four was the legalised number of wives, and, to keep within the mark, Mohammed became another Henry VIII. of England, disposing of many of them at will. *Mariage de convenance* was the forte of this sanctimonious Dongolian, his factotum following suit by taking unto himself the respectable number of twenty-four ladies!

Reports spreading of Mohammed's holiness, of his contemplation and fasting, of his weeping as he read the Koran—a wily individual was this religion-professing, unique Dongolian—curiosity was aroused; and his fame spreading, crowds of pilgrims assembled before his dwelling for advice. Taking time at the flood, he announced the mission he had resolved to adopt to a large gathering of Mohammedans. "Twice already," said he, "I have been called upon by the Archangel Gabriel to draw the sword of faith from the sheath, in order to reform the bad Moslem, and to found a Mohammedan world-empire which will secure the peace of the world." The fellow added that his mission came from the Prophet, and urged all to follow him as the Mahdi—the heaven-sent one—saying he would "lead them to the kingdom Allah had prepared for the faithful." In a measure, the native mind had been prepared for the advent of a Messiah or Prophet,

who, according to tradition, had been foretold by Mohammed himself as likely to appear about the year 1300 of the Hegira—A.D. 1881.

Mohammed having selected his hour for declaring his pretensions, thousands who had been ground down for years by the tyranny of the Bashi-Bazouk tax-gatherer flocked to his standard, willingly supporting the principles he propounded—Communism pure and simple, universal equality, universal law and religion, with an equal share of goods. Those who refused to credit his mission were to be destroyed, whether Christian, Mohammedan, or Pagan.

In August, 1881, the self-styled Mahdi showed himself at the head of his following near Senaar, finally taking up a position at Jabel Gadir, 150 miles north-west of Kaka on the White Nile; where, having defeated a body of Egyptian regulars, his fame and influence spread still further abroad, inspiring him and his adherents with fresh courage and ambition, and sowing the seeds of a rebellion which in a few months threatened the whole of Kordofan.

But we must not anticipate—we must refer at once to causes which led up to the occupation of Egypt by the British, about which so much has been said, and concerning which so much misunderstanding has arisen. Not that the presence of British troops in the land of the Pharaohs prior to the events with which we are dealing, primarily, was of necessity preliminary to subsequent action—although many believe there was a very close alliance between them—but as showing the tremendous interest England has in the country and its good government. We see, also, how that by the rebellion dealt with in this chapter the attention of the Egyptian Government was distracted and broken from troubles looming in distant

parts of the dominion, which might otherwise have been stifled once and for all time.

Shortly, then, the finances of Egypt have for years upon years been a thorn in her side. They have rarely, if ever been thoroughly satisfactory; they have, in fact, affected her seriously, and have brought about interferences Governments existing under happier auspices would have steadfastly resisted. Without going further back than the year 1876, we may observe that the Right Hon. Stephen Cave, who was sent on a special mission from England, reported on the great waste and extravagance countenanced in Egypt, that important national works had been undertaken with insufficient means, that losses were occasioned by adventures, that the military expenditure was misdirected, and that, with a view to restoring national credit and to restrain the expenditure, intervention of one or more of the European Powers was essential. The world had, in the previous year, been startled by the intelligence that Lord Beaconsfield's Government had purchased shares held by the Khedive in the Suez Canal to the extent of over four millions sterling, so that naturally, apart from our interest in Egypt, as bearing on the highway to our vast possessions in India and elsewhere, our connection with the country had become far more important than heretofore. However, an International Court was appointed; and without entering into details, it will be sufficient for our purpose to say that at the beginning of the year 1882 the Dual Control had been established, the position and united action of England and France being fully recognised.

In the month of January they presented a Joint Note upholding the Khedive's authority as against the Council of Notables—who had given no little trouble by their independence and threatening attitude—but, encouraged by Turkey, and the attitude of the European Powers not in the Control, they persisted in the line they had adopted, the outcome of which was a tacit acknowledgment on the

part of the Khedive of the claims of the National Party, and the appointment of Arabi Bey, one of their number, to the War Department. This Arabi seems to have fostered an intense hatred towards both England and France; and, as may be easily imagined, great was his rejoicing when elected to the Under-Secretaryship for War in contravention of the avowed wishes of the two Powers. The Notables, also, were in ecstasies at the promised success of their schemes; and more so when they practically assumed the reins of government. They urged that the finances should be left with them to deal with, that the Dual Control should be minimised as to interference; and the Sultan affecting a calm indifference, they became emboldened, pressing matters to an issue by defying Tewfik (the Khedive) and those who were supporting him. Yielding to importunities by the Notables, Tewfik countenanced their demands to a certain extent; and thus for a time, at any rate, the powers of France and England were nullified, and in danger of something like extinction. Nay, so far did the National Party proceed, that they objected loudly to any interference in Egyptian affairs from Governments outside the country, however powerful, and however interested they might be. Under these circumstances, an exchange of opinions passed between the Governments of England and France on the situation, England, especially, being emphatic in her determination to allow no subvention of her rights in the financial control.

In the meantime, Arabi's influence increased, not only among the Notables, but in the Army. He was looked up to on every hand as a leader, and as one who could do almost anything in the promotion of private interests. Accordingly, he was besieged by those preferring their own ends to the country's good; and disappointment occurring in certain quarters, a plan was hatched whereby it was sought to remove him. But the plot was futile; and some fifty officers found guilty of the conspiracy were

sentenced to various terms of imprisonment and to banishment in the Soudan. Unfortunately, neither the Sultan nor the Khedive insisted upon the sentences being given effect to; and in this way the Notables were still further encouraged, Arabi was promoted, others promoted themselves, disorders increased, and soon rumours arose of the intended abdication of the Khedive.

At length the crisis came to a head. The Notables refused to assemble at the invitation of the Ministers; the Ministers resigned with Arabi, who at the same time professed undying devotion to the Sultan and the Khedive, at their head, but the resignations were not accepted, and for a season naval demonstrations, made on behalf of England and France, ceased. The healing of the sore was for a very limited time only. Agitation reared its head again, revolution seethed prior to a general overflow, Arabi was called upon, once more, to resign; he refused, and the fate of Egypt trembled in the balance. Then, in the last week of May, 1882, came an ultimatum from the English and French Consuls, insisting on the removal of Arabi from the office he had refused to relinquish, and the Khedive assenting, the Ministry resigned. On this occasion the resignations were immediately accepted. Weakness was displayed by Tewfik again, however, in recalling Arabi at the instance of the Notables, an error which soon bore fruit in Arabi gaining control over the army, and a consequent displacement of the civil power, followed by fears in every circle of Europeans in Egypt, and the withdrawal of numbers of them from the country. Protestations were heard, of course, from the British and the French Governments, and Turkey seeing, or pretending to see, her hold on Egypt gradually falling away by the machinations of Arabi Pasha and the military party, despatched Dervish Pasha at the head of a mission, ordering, also, that labour on the defences at Alexandria should be stayed.

Neither protests nor missions availed, for in the middle

of June a fearful riot broke out in the streets of Alexandria; Englishmen and other Europeans were publicly attacked, nearly 100 persons were killed outright, the British Consul and a British naval officer being among the wounded; shops were wrecked, and terror maintained sway, Europeans in large numbers declining to stay where anarchy was supreme. Arabi disclaiming all complicity in, or sympathy with, the outrages, which had been quelled, remained in office. Yet suspicions were not allayed, and ere the month of June had expired 10,000 or 12,000 Europeans had left Egypt behind them. Indeed, the Khedive and the Turkish missionary were alarmed, and arriving at Alexandria, Arabi Pasha remained at Cairo master, really, of the situation.

Unmoved by the gravity of affairs, the Sultan took no active part in seeking to repress the still growing dangers, offering no objection, indeed, to the formation of a New Ministry, with Arabi virtually Prime Minister. Strange to say, those in the main responsible for the good government of the country, permitted themselves to be lulled into fancied security for a season. The members of the international Conference held in Constantinople were informed there would be no call for their deliberations, a circular, issued on behalf of the Sultan intimating that the crisis was no more. Whether the British and French Governments believed in this or not is best seen from the fact that the Consultates were vacated, and that preparation for military intervention was apparent on the side of the English. France evinced no token, however, to coincide with what the British were doing; indeed there were visible signs that, in spite of joint action in the past under the Dual Control, the French Government would not move when military and naval operations became necessary. This was seen all too plainly when Arabi addressed the Egyptian army in defiance of England and France, and, as he said, of the whole of Europe.

In the early days of July the English fleet of twenty-

four vessels had rendezvoused in the harbour outside Alexandria, under Sir Beauchamp Seymour, afterwards Lord Alcester; and Arabi having become exceeding insolent, as he was still defiant, an ultimatum was issued that unless the rebellious Minister gave instructions to discontinue the strengthening of the Alexandrian forts, the work would be esteemed acts of war, and that the forts would be at once destroyed. A temporary compliance with the ultimatum deferred the threatened operations, and afforded those Europeans remaining in the city an opportunity of beating a retreat. The French war vessels, it should be stated here, had already cleared out of Alexandrian waters, according to instructions from home, issued in spite of vehement protests from not a few French statesmen, leaving England to the duty of defending alone that which the Dual Control morally and legally imposed. A proposed vote of credit in the French Chamber for protection of the Suez Canal had actually been defeated, to the disgust of those who were not slow to designate the action, or rather inaction, of M. de Freycinet's Cabinet unworthy the traditions of the best Governments of France and the true interests and honour of the nation.

It was on July 10th that Admiral Seymour discovered the resumption of operations on the Alexandrian forts by Arabi's men, and, determined not to be trifled with any longer, he gave 24 hours' notice to all Europeans to vacate the city or to remain at their own peril. At the expiration of this term the bombardment of the forts commenced, to which the Egyptians promptly responded, and in this manner occurred the first of those hostilities which has been followed by so many varied criticisms, and anent which claims amounting to over four millions sterling were nominally accepted in respect to damages alleged to have been occasioned by the fire of the British, and subsequent demolition of public and private property.

Although the Admiral carried out his instructions to the

letter to fire on the forts only, the cannonade was made a *raison d'être* for fearful excesses in the shape of pillaging and incendiarism, whereby foreigners were killed and wounded, and Alexandria reduced, in some quarters, to ruins. Great anxiety was expressed for the safety of the Khedive, but he had fled the perils of the rebellion; and, to the joy of his friends and supporters, entered Ramleh uninjured. On the 15th July he returned to Alexandria, now in possession of British sailors and marines. As to Arabi, he was next heard of at Kafrdawar at the head of six thousand soldiers, where he received orders to resign office—orders he positively declined to obey. Indeed, he candidly confessed that he was resolved to oppose the British; and, writing to Mr. Gladstone, he stated that the Prophet had commanded his countrymen to resist war if waged against them, and, under penalty of being eternally destroyed, to follow those who assaulted them with every weapon upon which they could lay hands. Egypt was held, Arabi said, by Mohammedans as the key of Mecca and Medina, and all were bound by just laws to defend these holy places and the ways leading to them. "England, in fine," concluded the rebel, "may rest assured we are determined to fight, to die like martyrs for our country—as has been enjoined us by our Prophet—or else to conquer our enemies. Happiness, in either case, is promised us, and when a people is imbued with this belief their courage knows no bounds." Rendered desperate by the situation, and beholding the undue lengths to which his nature, his ambition, and his hatred of Europeans had led him, Arabi maintained his resistance, and threatened dire destruction by flooding the Mahmondieh Canal, and thereby cutting off the Alexandria water supply. He at the same time denounced the Khedive, and Tewfik foreswore Arabi. In the interval a continuous stream of reinforcements arrived in Egypt from England, India, and other of the dependencies, and prepared for the complete subjugation of the revolutionists.

Arabi's being proclaimed by the Khedive did not seem to affect him materially in the eyes of those who followed him; indeed his influence spread among the military, and indications were not wanting that the British—who had refused aid from the Porte, and expressed a decision to perform the task undertaken single-handed—had tough work before them, a task which had received the unqualified approval of the Khedive.

It is not our intention to follow the progress of the campaign stage by stage, to show in detail how that, by a splendidly-executed stratagem, Sir Garnet Wolseley, the Commander-in-Chief, changed the base of operations from Alexandria to Port Said, and, by a succession of rapid movements, overcame Arabi and caused the rebellion to collapse utterly. Ismailia, Ramleh, Kassassin, the crowning victory at Tel-el-Kebir—whither Arabi made his last stand with some 28,000 rebels—at which 15,000 British, with 60 guns, were present on September 14th, 1882, disposed of Arabi's pretensions for ever. Suffice it to remark then, that Arabi was captured at Cairo on the 16th September, that peace was restored, and the main instrument banished to Ceylon after many remands on charges of inciting to rebellion and actual participation in offences against law and order.

England having unhesitatingly asserted her right to interfere not only in financial affairs in Egypt, but to subdue any danger threatening the welfare of the empire, even to the most rigorous of measures and in the teeth of loud protestations, evinced her further resolve not to yield the country to a Government for which there was not sufficient warranty of strength to cope with disorders, military and otherwise. This resolve was plainly shown in providing for an Army of Occupation and the appointment of officials to departments in which she was deeply concerned, Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues declaring at the same time that when internal matters were secured on a thoroughly sure foundation the whole of the British

troops should be withdrawn and Egypt entrusted once more with the management of her own institutions. This policy, and the vigour with which the late campaign had been prosecuted, were applauded by men of both political parties at home, and for the moment repeated insinuations that the war had been carried out on behalf of the bondholders were hushed, increased satisfaction being expressed at the implied intention of the Government that, considering the fashion in which England had had to cope alone with the Egyptian outbreak, the restoration of the Dual Control could not be tolerated.

The Egyptian army having been disbanded, Baker Pasha began his scheme of reorganization, which, when matured, was found to consist, in the text, of a proposal to enrol 11,000 men, to include 1,400 gendarmerie, the latter being ultimately placed under Baker and the former under command of Sir Evelyn Wood.

CHAPTER II.

STORM CLOUDS AGAIN—THE MAHDI IN ARMS—SPREAD OF THE SOUDAN REBELLION—DEFEAT OF EGYPTIAN TROOPS—ARMY REFORMS—COLONEL STEWART'S MISSION TO KHARTOUM—PROJECTED RELIEF OF SOUDAN GARRISONS—BRIGHTER PROSPECTS—CONFIDENCE OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT—MR. GLADSTONE DISOWNS RESPONSIBILITY.

TORN asunder by jealousies in high places at Cairo, by false ambition and hatred of English and French officials, by intrigues that could not be hidden from the searching light of day, by emotions as conflicting as they were dangerous, by the effects of misplaced leniency, a recurring feeling of security only too unreal, by secret understandings where the interested parties ought to have been far, far above such schemes—where dignity should have maintained sway and have scorned to lose itself at the bidding of a rebellious spirit—distraught by the shameful excesses of an active revolution and the loss of all command over outrages on the person and on property; with the Government a nonentity and a soldiery so completely worthless that they used every endeavour to oppose the operations of an army relegated to the task of evolving order out of chaos, stability from hollow shams, and lasting quietude out of a very pandemonium of sounds; and weighted by

impending bankruptcy and the wails of a fellah¹ ~~were~~ ground to the dust by disgraceful extravagance and wanton misrule, minus the ability or the strength to recover themselves, to discharge their indebtedness, or to release themselves from burdens too heavy for them to bear, Egypt had had neither the time nor the inclination to turn her attention to the storm clouds gathering away inland, and which were destined, ultimately, to threaten the most vital of her functions.

Rumours there were, vague and questionable, months before the schemes of Arabi were disclosed, that a religious movement similar to the one engendered in the country lying between Kassala and Suakim in the year 1867 was being fomented upon the borders of Equatorial Africa, amid rocky fastnesses and in and around sterile deserts. The onward march of another Mahdi, which had been announced to the Egyptians in 1881, was, according to these reports, favoured by the peoples inhabiting the vast tracts over which he passed; and there were statements, emanating from sources it was hard to define, that the new movement was gaining strength day by day. But when, in May, 1882, intelligence reached the capital of Egypt that the Mahdi was marching on Khartoum, 1,250 miles from Cairo, as the crow flies, with 10,000 followers, the Khedive was powerless to stem the tide rolling in from his distant and arid dependency. Already the seeds of disruption had been sown at the very doors of his palace, and, as we have seen, a fruit, terrible in its kind, was borne. However, the pretensions of the Mahdi were favoured by thousands of the sons of the desert south, south-east, and south-west of Khartoum. The heathen resident in Darfur and in Kordofan, which, with Nubia, has a population of over 2,000,000 souls, soon revolted with him. They assisted in the rout of 5,000 Egyptian regulars quartered in the desert regions, capturing cannon and hundreds of rifles, and having gained a second victory over troops in name only, and who could

not be supported by aid from Lower Egypt, they began to march on Senaar.

Scarcely had the Egyptian army been disbanded after allying itself with the fortunes, or rather misfortunes, of Arabi, than alarming news came from the Soudan that the reported successes of the Mahdi were confirmed, the communication adding: "Khartoum is fortified, but the soldiers demoralised by repeated defeats, and the scared population are adhering to the Mahdi. El Obeid, the capital of Kordofan, has been 40 days besieged. Its capture is expected, and the attack on Khartoum will follow. Communication with Darfur has ceased. Berber and Dongola are tranquil but doubtful."

The intelligence from the Soudan could not be ignored. It spread consternation in official circles in Egypt proper and created some sensation in English military centres in the country. Fears began to be entertained that the reforms instituted towards placing the army on a more permanent basis would be completed none too soon; that the new army would indeed be called upon to perform duties for which it was totally inadequate, cohesion and solidarity being elements of the slowest growth where the material was rough and knotty. Accordingly, army reforms were pushed on with renewed haste, and the several classes of the Egyptians settling down to their wonted avocations, tired of the unrest that had prevailed, and wishful—at any rate in those quarters where true patriotism was a factor—effort became a noticeable feature, sloth vanishing in a corresponding ratio. Not that the point had been reached to which the Under-Secretary for India was able to testify from observations during a visit at a later period, when the police force had been organised under English rule and under English inspectors, after being taken out of the hands of the governors of provinces, when Mr. Clifford Lloyd had done much in the direction of abolishing punishment in order to make people confess, and when arrangements for the perfect irrigation of Egypt had so

far advanced as to create a supply for the poor as well as the rich, at the same time increasing the value of the soil to a degree not attained in former years. Reforms had, however, set in, and the arts of peace were being cultivated alike in city and village.

Quite alive to the importance the peristent rumours the Mahdi's advance on Khartoum might have on the future of Egypt, the approval of the authorities was gained by Sir Archibald Alison, then in command of the Army of Occupation, to despatch special envoys to the Soudan in order to report upon the whole military situation in the provinces. The officers—Colonel D. H. Stewart (11th Hussars, as the chief), Captain Kelham, and Lieut. Wood—were also specially instructed to obtain information concerning the roads from Suakim on the Red Sea coast to Khartoum, and the possibility of placing the latter town in a state of defence, that a proper estimate might be arrived at of the military requirements of Egypt. Moreover, a Council of Ministers was appointed to consider the situation in the Soudan, and, in reply to instructions, a former Governor of the province sent in a report estimating that twenty thousand men were necessary to quell the insurrection, an undertaking that at that comparatively early period—early, taking into account the extent to which the revolution has since grown, and the time consumed in coming to a head—would cost at least two millions sterling. On the other hand, an officer who had had some experience in the Soudan believed that two thousand English or Indian soldiers could restore order, if landed at Suakim and conducted across the desert to Berber, where the fringe of the rebellion had reached. Of the two estimates, circumstances which transpired on the last day of October, 1882, seemed to favour the latter, the most recent news from the Soudan lessening the alarm that had been felt; not the least important item being that the Mahdi was addressing his attention principally to strongholds in Kordofan, and that, therefore, he had not

advanced in the immediate vicinity of Khartoum as had been reported. Further, that the rumours of the annihilation of a large body of blacks by the False Prophet was unfounded—although it was admitted that one-half of them had been destroyed—and that missionaries who had left Khartoum on learning that the Mahdi was approaching had returned to the city with a number of the populace who had fled with them. Still, measures were forwarded for sending a relief expedition, and Ministers finally adopted, in general, the scheme of re-organization of the army, to be composed almost wholly of Egyptians belonging to the class known as fellahween.

The year 1882 closed, therefore, with brighter prospects as regarded Egypt proper, army reforms having progressed satisfactorily; indications pointing also to a certain amount of contentment among the poor fellahween, and, at the same time, a decrease in the extravagance that had been so long a blot upon officialism, supported as it was by taxes wrung from the suffering. If nothing else could be adduced in proof of the restoration of confidence in Egypt, politically and otherwise, it may be found in the fact that by degrees the British force, which when Tel-el-Kebir was fought and won on the 14th September was over 25,000 of all arms, by the 31st December between 13,000 and 14,000 only remained in occupation in case of any uprising, and the strength was in course of still further reduction. That the British Government did not anticipate that the services of our men would be further required in the Egyptian dominions may be gathered from an answer by Mr. Gladstone in the House of Commons about this time, that the withdrawal of troops would still be continued, as the Government had no intention of remaining in permanent occupation. Lord Derby and others of the Ministry re-echoed the sentiment; indeed, no secret was made of the matter that at the earliest possible moment Egypt should be ruled and occupied by Egyptians alone. Far less did the British Government suppose the

troops at their command would ever march into the Soudan, notwithstanding that they were well aware of the troubles occasioned by the Mahdi and his numerous following, for on the 3rd November a question was submitted in Parliament whether her Majesty's Government continued to regard the Soudan as forming part of the Government of Egypt, and, if so, whether they would take immediate steps to restore order in that province, "which had been left without defence," the hon. questioner (Mr. O'Donnell) said, "owing to the disbandment of the Egyptian army," to which the Premier replied: "We have no occasion to give judgment at all upon the question, and we have delivered no judgment upon it. It is no part of the duty incumbent upon us to restore order in the province. It is politically connected with Egypt in consequence of a very recent conquest, but it has not been included within the sphere of our operations, and we are by no means disposed to admit, without qualification, that it is within the sphere of our responsibility."

Little did the Premier of England and his colleagues dream of what the womb of the future had in store for them.

CHAPTER III.

COLONEL STEWART AT KHARTOUM—THE FIRE STILL BURNING—CAUSES OF THE REVOLT—OPPRESSION OF THE PEOPLE—THE SLAVE TRADE—ARAB MANNER OF FIGHTING—DERVISHES—INTENTIONS OF THE MADHI—ABDUL KADER'S MISSION—CONTINUED SPREAD OF THE REBELLION—ANOTHER EGYPTIAN DEFEAT—CAPTURE OF EL OBEID—TRIUMPH OF THE FALSE PROPHET.

COLONEL STEWART, who, it will be remembered, was deputed to visit the Soudan and report on the situation and matters associated with it, arrived at Khartoum exactly a week prior to Christmas Day, 1882. Used to travelling in the desert, and inured to trials and difficulties in every shape as a former companion of General Gordon in many of his lonely and adventurous undertakings, Stewart was none the worse on arriving at the city just named, and he forthwith commenced a searching Inquiry, as the character of his mission impelled him to do. He found Khartoum quiet, and that news from Kordofan, further south, showed it still to be the centre of the rebellion, albeit the investment of El Obeid, where an Egyptian garrison was holding out bravely, was not so strictly maintained, many of the rebels having been obliged to retire by reason of the scarcity of water. The garrison then consisted of 3,500 men, but not strong enough to take the offensive, they called loudly for reinforcements. From Bara, another place still

faithful to the Egyptian cause—but which had to yield a few months afterwards by the cruelty of Fate—news had been received a fortnight before saying that the number of troops there was 2,000, that they were short of food, and that they were seriously menaced by the rebels—communication with El Obeid having been cut off. As to the province of Darfur, likewise between Khartoum and the Equator, and deeply affected by the movement in favour of the Mahdi, the latest reports were six months old, the Governor of the southern portion of the province stating that he could not be responsible for the maintenance of order unless a battalion of troops were sent to strengthen him. Abdul Kader Pasha, said Colonel Stewart in a despatch to Sir E. Malet, the British Minister in Egypt, dated two days after his making Khartoum, called for seven battalions ere he could march to the relief of Bara. Black troops were then being brought to Khartoum from Massowah—lying south-east of the city—their place being held by Egyptians.

A perusal of the following summary of a despatch from Colonel Stewart, dated Khartoum, December 27th, 1883, to Sir E. Malet, will repay in a great degree attention, as showing, in a clearer light than anything that had hitherto appeared, the nature of the motive power of the rebellion in the Soudan, and southwards, and the character of the man who was, and had been for eighteen months its prime spirit. The chief causes of the revolution were held by Colonel Stewart to be venality and oppression of the officials, particularly those in the lower classes, the suppression of the slave trade, and military weakness. Like what obtained in Turkey, the chief means of oppression was the tax-gatherers, generally an irregular soldier—a Bashi-Bazouk, Turk, Tunisian, &c.—who had all things pretty much their own way on account of absence of proper supervision, because of the vast area entrusted to them for tax-collecting purposes. Colonel Stewart had heard thus early of instances where the Bashi-Bazouk

on his small salary maintained twelve houses, twenty servants, and a number of women, and this in places where the payment for the water of his cattle alone would have cost more than three times the amount of his salary. Then it was no uncommon thing for a peasant to have to pay his taxes four or five times over, without the Treasury being any the richer. It might, indeed, be said that wherever the Bashi-Bazouk put in an appearance oppression and universal discontent was the result.

That the suppression of the slave trade, or, rather, the difficulties thrown in its way was also a potent cause, was evident from the list of tribes who supported the Mahdi. Many, if not the majority of these tribes, were the Baggara, or owners of cattle. These tribes were all of Arab descent, and from time immemorial had been inveterate slave hunters. On the head of military weakness as an incentive to rebellion, Colonel Stewart was inclined to the belief that there were quite enough troops had they been only handled with ordinary intelligence, decision, and forethought. He criticised the system of scattering small detachments over the country, a few strong garrisons in well-chosen places being far more preferable.

No apology is needed for reproducing Colonel Stewart's description of the Arab manner of fighting, so literally does it bear out reports of more recent experiences in the Red Sea littoral and wide expanse of desert, bounded on the east by the great bend of the Nile, and which Lord Wolseley's command in the Soudan know so intimately. The rebel method of attack, the gallant and now sorely lamented Colonel added in his despatch, was to seize a moment when the troops were unoccupied and unready, such as drawing water and unloading camels, and then to rush madly on them in a dense mass, of men, women and children. The women and children, of course, did not fight, and were only there to encourage the men through their low, continuous, and weird cries, along with a frantic beating of small drums. The men fought mostly with

flat-headed lances, with which, during the advance, they shielded their faces, though of late they had begun to use the captured rifles. They were also in the habit of shutting their eyes when advancing. Of all the supporters of the Mahdi, the dervish was the most formidable, the fearless and desperate way with which he rushed on to a square armed with Remingtons being really marvellous. To protect the soldiers from these sudden attacks, one of the first things that was done after unloading the camels was to build a "jerriba" (zareba), or thorny hedge, round the camping ground. Everyone then entered inside this inclosure. Practically, the precautions of posting outposts, scouts, and videttes were never taken, so that the troops were always liable to surprise. The Egyptian regiment on the march was likewise greatly hampered by the number of women which followed it; in fact, it might really be said that every regiment of soldiers was followed by an equally numerous regiment of women.

On the 29th December a special messenger arrived at Khartoum from Kordofan and stated that the garrison were fairly well supplied with food, and were in good spirits. They had sallied out a few days previous to his leaving, attacked the principal rebel sheikh in the district, and killed seventy to eighty of his people. From Obeid (in Kordofan) the messenger went to Bara, where he corroborated the statement that the garrison were badly off for food and in a depressed condition. Some of the irregular officers, with their men, had been cowardly enough to desert to the rebels, thereby weakening the garrison practically and morally. Another Mahdi had appeared in the district, but he was promptly seized and hanged. At that time the False Prophet's intention was, after taking Obeid and Bara, to march on Darfur and thence on Tripoli and Constantinople.

The year 1883 opened in anything but an auspicious manner for the Egyptian cause. On the 1st January Abdul Kader, the chief officer of the troops, decided to

go himself into the midst of the infested districts—proceeding first to Messelemiah—take command of the troops, and clear the whole country between Senaar and Rana. The time was well adapted for the purpose of the expedition, as no advance could be made on Obeid to relieve the garrison there, besieged by troops led by the Mahdi in person, and the pasha was fully alive to the great importance of relieving the two towns, or at least Obeid, largely stocked with ammunition and guns, knowing that to lose the town, with these valuables and its two regiments of negro troops, would be an almost irreparable disaster, and vastly increase the difficulty of carrying on the war.

How prophetic in spirit this was, and how very weighty in its bearing on subsequent events, shared in by the British as well as the Egyptians, we shall see in an early chapter.

To resume, Abdul Kader departed on his journey, and, unfortunately, he was repulsed; hence it was impossible to stop the advance on the town of Sybel he would have relieved, and which fell not long afterwards, four strong companies having been defeated outside the town. Another disaster had also happened on the eastern bank of the White Nile. A detachment had been sent out from one of the forts in the district in a northerly direction to repair the telegraph wire between the station and Khartoum, when they were attacked by a body of rebels, their square broken, and many killed. The Bara garrison was also in a desperate plight about the same time, and even then were not expected to hold out many days.

In the meantime, the expedition under Abdul Kader for Messelemiah proceeded along the river, and was met with striking civility by the notables and fakirs (spiritual guides), who were requested to use their influence in keeping the people quiet, but their allegiance was doubted, and they were left behind with many cautions. At Réfaa, a district a little wide of the Blue Nile, Abdul found that the men

of the tribe were exceedingly skilful in wielding the sword and the lance, that many of them wore chain armour, and that their horses were similarly protected. Wherever the expedition went, one story only was prevalent, namely, that the rebellion was spreading; and deeming it advisable to concentrate on Senaar, on the Blue Nile—on the borders of Abyssinia, and to the south-east of Khartoum, it should be stated here, having in view the obduracy with which it resisted the inroads of the rebellion for a long time afterwards—Abdul Kader called up a number of battalions, and did all he could to prevent the flow of the tide he perceived had set in with such giant strength. A circumstance which hampered the Egyptian officers' movements seriously was that Abyssinian troops took the initiative against a number of the garrisons lying upon the borders of King John's country, and they had to be met in open conflict and defeated ere the Egyptians could be rid of their presence.

Space will not permit of a detailed account of the fighting around the banks of the White Nile, which takes its rise in Central Africa, and the Blue Nile, having its source in Abyssinia, which, meeting at Khartoum, thence flow in one common river onwards throughout the length of Middle and Lower Egypt; so that, summing up the state of things as they rested in the affected districts, we may observe that at the end of January, 1883, the garrisons still impeding the progress of the fanatical hordes owing allegiance to the Mahdi, included About, Messelemiah, Shawwal, Khartoum, Rana, Duem, Senaar, and El Obeid, the two last-named being the most important, separated as they were by the White Nile, and precluding the False Prophet from continuing his march northward while in the hands of the power he was seeking to supplant. Bara surrendered, as was anticipated, the rebels capturing 2,000 troops, besides a considerable number of arms and ammunition; desertions from El Obeid were of daily occurrence, and rumours began to

spread, which were subsequently confirmed, that the town had been taken by the False Prophet's troops. This was (383) on the 19th January. The capture vastly increased the strength of the Arabs in guns and ammunition, augmented the Mahdi's prestige, and confirmed thousands in the belief of the divine mission upon which he gave it out that he had been sent. Unhappily, treachery did its work, as England had reason to sadly lament, in so many places at subsequent periods, the garrison holding up the stocks of their guns in token of submission as the Arabs were about to storm the entrenchments. On the following day the Mahdi entered the town with great triumph, and the governor was presented with the coloured coat of a dervish, but subsequently imprisoned with a chain round his neck. As we shall see, El Obeid was retained by the Mahdi as his head-quarters during more recent operations, being admirably situated for the laying of lines of communications to every quarter of the far-stretching Soudan and difficult of access from Cairo to the north, or Suakim, and Massowah on the Red Sea coast, to the north-east and east respectively, the alternate routes open to the advance of a new invading army.

Before leaving El Obeid for the present, it is only common justice to state that the first report of the manner in which the town fell to the Mahdi was flatly contradicted at a later period. This version of the catastrophe was that the Mahdi arrived at the place on the 6th or 7th of June, 1882, and summoned a surrender. On the 9th a desperate assault occurred, in which the rebels distinguished themselves by their total indifference to the hail of bullets showered upon them. On the southern side, near the magazine, 600 Arabs effected an entrance, and shot the doctor and 22 soldiers. After some very hard fighting they were repulsed, and took refuge in houses near the magazine, where they were surrounded and all killed. On the day following, the Mudir of Kordofan begged the Hakumden of West Soudan to allow

him to attack the rebels with 2,000 men, pointing out that now was the time to do so when they were demoralised by their great defeat. The Hakumden refused, however, and the golden opportunity was lost. Thereafter the town was closely invested, food began to fail, and in October the garrison were put on quarter rations. Inaction continued on both sides, except that small sorties were of frequent occurrence. The besiegers established themselves comfortably round the town, some availing themselves of ruined houses, others building straw huts and patiently awaiting the inevitable surrender. On the afternoon of the 16th January, 1883, the Arabs advanced in force against the town, firing off guns and showing signs of rejoicing. During the night the majority of the garrison deserted, and on the 19th the remainder surrendered. The Mahdi pillaged the public treasury, the troops were disarmed, and preparations made for a prolonged stay.

CHAPTER IV.

APPOINTMENT OF COLONEL HICKS—INTENSIFIED ALARM IN EGYPT—EARL DUFFERIN'S ADVICE—REINFORCEMENTS FOR THE BESIEGED GARRISONS—HICKS' VICTORY OVER THE MAHDI—SUBMISSION OF CHIEFS—HICKS PASHA COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF — THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT STILL DISCLAIM RESPONSIBILITY—MONEY AND PROVISIONS WANTED—NOTE FROM THE KHEDIVE.

COLONEL HICKS was appointed Chief of the Staff at Khartoum in the last week of January, 1883. He was an officer of tried parts, a tall, handsome man—indeed, he was known as “the handsome colonel;” his disposition being no less attractive than his outward appearance. He had served in the Sutlej campaign with distinction, was present with the 6th Bengal Native Infantry when it mutinied at Allahabad, and afterwards served as a volunteer in the cavalry which Havelock led. His superior officer at Khartoum was Alaiden Pasha, who had superseded Abdul Kader, away on another attempt to tranquillise the tribes in the southern portions of the Soudan, and who reached Senaar after some desperate fighting and varying fortune in the month of February.

In spite of the fact that Abdul Kader gained a decided victory in the neighbourhood of Senaar, and checked the revolt thereabouts, elsewhere the Mahdi's influence showed

no tokens of waning, for drawn to his standards by prospects of loot, if not believing in what he alleged to be his divine mission, and tired of being bowed down by the cruelties of the tax-gatherer, and inability to gain more than the scantiest existence, tribe after tribe yielded to the temptations Mohammed Ahmed offered to the faithful; and the peoples from near Equatorial Africa, northwards and westwards, to Khartoum, and even nearer Egypt proper became roused, and surged, nearly 50,000 of them, in open rebellion. A special bureau for the superintendence of affairs in the Soudan was constituted in Cairo, and a more serious attention was bestowed consequently on events as they arose. Lord Dufferin, who was then political minister in Cairo for the British Government, impressed the bureau with his belief that the disturbances in the Soudan were mainly to be attributed to the misgovernment and the cruel exactions of the local Egyptian authorities, and that whatever might be the pretensions of the Mahdi to a divine mission, his chief strength was derived from the despair and misery of the native population. If the Egyptian Government were wise, Earl Dufferin reported to Earl Granville, the British Foreign Secretary, it would confine its present efforts to the re-establishment of its authority in Senaar, and would not seek to extend its dominion beyond that province and the bordering river banks. By this modest policy the annual drain on the Egyptian Treasury would be vastly diminished, if it did not altogether cease, and—he informed the head of the new Department, Ibrahim Bey—if he succeeded in endowing Dongola—200 miles nearer Cairo than Khartoum—Khartoum, and the more distant Senaar with a just, humane, and beneficent administration, there could be no doubt the ultimate recovery of so much of the abandoned territories as it might be desirable to re-annex would be easily affected at a later period.

Apparently, there was no endeavour to benefit by the

advice proffered by Earl Dufferin, although it cannot be laid to the charge of Abdul Kader that he neglected any labour to rid Senaar of the presence of the rebels. Having relieved the garrison, he set out to discover whither the rebels had retreated, and soon learned they were assembled at a place called Sekeldy, six hours west of Senaar. A force, made up of 1,200 regulars, was at once directed on Sekeldy; an engagement occurred on the 4th March, resulting in the total defeat of the rebels, who lost 540 killed. Abdul then occupied the wells in the district, marched along the Blue Nile with the view of pacifying the country as he proceeded, then crossed to the east bank, on a like errand, to put down a powerful chief who had raised the standard of revolt between two minor rivers, the Dinder and the Rahat.

During the time occupied by the operations of Abdul, Colonel Hicks arrived at Khartoum—this was on March 8th, 1883, two days before the departure of Colonel Stewart, who had fulfilled his mission with conspicuous success and to the complete satisfaction of those who despatched him on another mission—and in his official capacity he took with him two battalions and some guns to reinforce the Kana garrison, and then to attack and disperse the rebels collected at Abu Juma on the White Nile, purporting to return along the river bank to Khartoum, which would bring the spring operations to a close. Hicks soon made his presence felt, for he obtained a decisive victory over the troops of the Mahdi, 4,000 in number, of whom 500 were killed, including the chief and several of their sheikhs and principal leaders.

It may be remarked, *inter alia*, that on Earl Granville being officially informed of Hicks' victory he wired to Cairo that Her Majesty's Government were in no way responsible for the operations in the Soudan, "which have been undertaken by the authority of the Egyptian Government" or for the appointment or actions of General Hicks—who had been promoted from the rank of

lieutenant-colonel in his new capacity. This despatch, it should be noted, was dated May 7th, 1883.

Describing the victory of Hicks Pasha, which shed a fleeting ray of light upon everything that was gloomy and threatening, Mr. O'Donovan, the much travelled and talented special correspondent of the *Daily News*, and who in the late autumn of the same year was killed by the side of Hicks Pasha, wrote:—

“General Hicks joined our camp on the 25th April, about 18 miles south of the fort at Kana, on hearing that the enemy were advancing in large numbers against us. He had gone up the Nile with a force towards Gebel-Ain, and had destroyed a number of rafts built by the enemy for the purpose of crossing over to Kordofan. On his arrival, information having been received that the enemy were close at hand and determined to attack us at once, it was considered as well to wait for them, so we did not march on the 26th. True enough, about 11 on the morning of that day a large body of horsemen were seen approaching from the south-east, about 2,000 yards distant. Every soldier was in his place in a moment, awaiting steadily but anxiously the coming of the foe; for it was impossible to know what number of men might swoop down on us from the waving ground. They approached to 1,000 yards, when rockets and shells were at once discharged at them. The soldiers—who had formed in a solid square—threw out “crows feet,” or little iron spikes joined in three—a device calculated to make the ground inconvenient for stepping on to sandal-shod savages or horses without shoes. The horsemen now raced off, and were no more seen for the time; but they hung about us during the day, though no attack was made.

“On the 27th tents were struck at dawn, and the army continued its march south, leaving woods and the river on the right flank. We had been again told, on apparently most reliable authority, that the enemy were waiting for us four miles from our halting place in these

woods, and would certainly be on us very shortly and endeavour to intercept our further progress. But they made no sign, though we gave them every chance of attack. After about a 12 miles' march we halted for the night.

"On the 29th tents were struck, as usual, at daybreak, and the order given to march at seven. The great difficulty of General Hicks' movement is the total absence of cavalry, and all reconnoitring has to be done by the officers of his staff. The danger of this insufficient means of scouting was shown now. Colonel Farquhar, who has all along been indefatigable in this duty, accompanied by Captain Massey and four Bashi-Bazouks, had not been far, when they raced in to report the enemy's advance. So rapid was this that in 15 minutes they were on us in a cloud. It was nine, and we had marched some five miles. About 1,000 yards to our front and right was a wood, out of which spearmen were seen pouring in their thousands, led by their chiefs carrying gaily-coloured banners. We had formed a vast square and halted. A tremendous fusillade was opened from our front face, apparently without effect, for they still came on gallantly; but at 500 yards they began to fall fast. The rebels were commanded by Amer Makushigi, who, with another leader, the Sheih El Arakee, had been only recently sent from Kordofan by Mohammed Ahmed, the so-called Mahdi. Calmly, and apparently without the slightest fear, did these Arab cavaliers ride about from right to left, as if seeking to pick out a weak point at which to charge and break into our compact body. Their devotedness was in vain. One after another they bit the ground, the first-named chieftain being rolled over by the Nordenfeldt at our left corner. After half-an-hour's continued rattle of musketry, seeing their chiefs fallen, and their banners in the dust, the advancing hordes wavered, and were greeted with a tremendous howl from our troops, who had stood firmly and unflinchingly, and I may say as steadily as any troops could. Now the enemy moved off to their right,

among the long grass, and our front was cleared. All were soon out of sight, except a few who walked about most unconcernedly, and actually singly came up, after the rest had retreated, to within a few yards, brandishing their spears in defiance. One after another these poor fanatics were knocked over. When the smoke had rolled away, it was seen that the ground was strewn with corpses, most of them within 400 yards. A strange episode occurred now. Two men were lying with one of the standards before spoken of within about six yards. An Egyptian captain was sent out by his colonel to secure it. No sooner had he taken hold of it than up rose the standard bearer, who was wounded only in the leg, and dashed a spear into his left hand; while the other, not wounded at all, also attacked him. The officer cut over the first with a blow on his neck, and the other was shot, but not before a desperate struggle had taken place. And when victory was secured three cheers were now given for the Khedive, then for Hicks Pasha, and then for Suleiman Pasha, the general who commanded under the instructions of General Hicks, who is of course in supreme authority. The joy and enthusiasm of the troops at this their first victory were intense. Their officers came up and warmly shook hands with the English officers. We march onward to follow up the retreating army, who will probably go and join another body at Gbbálain. I forgot to mention that the number of the enemy was 4,000 to 5,000, and that of the killed about 500. Numbers went away wounded, or were carried off. Our loss was two killed and a few wounded. The English officers who were with the troops that marched by land from Kana were Colonel Hon. J. Colborne and Colonel de Coetlogan. The officers who came with General Hicks were Colonel Farquhar, Q.M.G., Captain Massey, Captain Evans, and Dr. Rosenberg. Several friendly chiefs whose tribes have been plundered, and who have had several of their men killed, have come in from day to day."

Ten chiefs had, indeed, professed submission to General Hicks in as many days, the country round about became tranquil, and anticipations were high that the rebellion had been broken as regarded the Baggara tribes. On May 13th Hicks hastened to Duem, which still held out, 500 men strong, mainly negroes, moving his victorious army with him ; and feeling confident that probabilities were in favour of heightened successes were he appointed to the chief command of all the Egyptian troops in the southern province, so that he might be unfettered by any vexatious restrictions emanating from local Egyptian officials, who, as a rule, were slothful and phlegmatic, he asked the Khedive, through General Baker, that he should be acknowledged as Commander-in-Chief, a request which was granted on the 22nd August.

Back again at Khartoum on the 3rd June, 1883, and directly responsible to whom he scarcely knew, since Sir Edward Malet, writing in the absence of Earl Dufferin, had stated on the 22nd May that to prevent any misunderstanding as to the position of her Majesty's Government in regard to the operations in the Soudan, they wished it to be known that they in no sense endorsed the telegrams he might send, while, as a fact, he forwarded them to the acting British Consul at Cairo, Hicks Pasha requested that the force under his command should be increased by 6,000 men, to enable him to undertake an expedition into Kordofan as soon as the rainy season was over. Hicks stated, in support of this, that although the Mahdi had recently lost influence he had a considerable number of men, and after the season for cultivation of fields had passed, it was likely he would be joined by more. The force of Egyptians was not nearly sufficient, the pasha telegraphed, to undertake a campaign into Kordofan, which seemed essential. Then, marching as the force would have to do through an hostile country, every ounce of food would have to be conveyed from Khartoum, the line of communication would, perforce, have to be kept

open, and depôts formed with strong garrisons, and, in addition, each convoy would require an escort. The available strength would be 6,000 only, of whom many would most likely be sick after the rainy season. He could not, he said, withdraw a man from the Blue Nile stations; Khartoum was full of rebels, and a sufficient garrison must be left there. In fact, after making all reasonable deductions, the attacking force would be 3,000 infantry, or 7,000 under the standard of requirement. What number, Hicks put it, would it be possible for the Government to send him in augmentation? When he considered that a defeat must mean not only the loss of Darfur and Kordofan, but also Senaar, and, possibly, Khartoum, he thought no risk should be run. The estimate of cost of the existing field force was, he added, for the ensuing six months, £120,000, without transports, which should be forwarded.

Sir Edward B. Malet, in transmitting the message from Hicks to Earl Granville, remarked that it was already impossible for the Egyptian Government to supply the funds demanded for the Soudan, and that the proposed operations would run a considerable risk of failure unless conducted on a large scale, and unless the army were well supplied in every respect. Under these circumstances, a question arose whether General Hicks should be instructed to confine himself to maintaining the present supremacy of the Khedive in the regions between the Blue and White Niles. This would have excluded the country round about El Obeid, where the disastrous defeat of Hicks occurred. In another despatch, dated May 24th, to Earl Granville, Sir E. B. Malet enclosed a copy of a request telegraphed by the Governor-General of the Soudan for a large monthly instalment to be placed at his disposal to enable him to meet the exigencies of the situation. His Excellency reminded the Egyptian Government that in ordinary times there was a deficit of £200,000 in the Soudan Budget, but in the present emergency it became necessary to defray the cost of the military expedition which

had been sent there, and that it was now more than ever desirable to satisfy the demands of the troops, who were clamouring for arrears of payment. At the same time, the taxes could not be enforced for fear of producing further disaffection among the inhabitants. Sir E. Malet believed it impossible, however, to estimate the amount which would suffice to gain the objects of the Governor-General; but it was evident that it would far exceed the existing capabilities of the Egyptian Ministry.

About the same period the British Consul addressed a letter to the responsible Egyptian Minister, Chérif Pasha, in which he once more stated that her Majesty's Government were not in any way responsible for the military operations in the Soudan. To this communication Chérif Pasha replied:—"May 27th, 1883. My dear Sir Edward,—You have been good enough, in communicating to me a copy of a telegram from General Hicks, to inform me that by this communication it was not at all your idea to support the demands contained in this telegram. You consider it necessary, at the same time, to remind me that Her Majesty's Government is in no way responsible for the nomination of General Hicks, nor for the military operations which he is conducting under the authority of His Highness's Government. I assure you, my dear Sir Edward, that I could not possibly have had any doubt on this subject, so that I can only thank you for the ideas so frankly expressed in your letter, and beg you to accept the assurance, &c. (Signed) CHÉRIF."

CHAPTER V.

THREATENED BANKRUPTCY—HICKS PASHA AGAIN LEAVES
KHARTOUM — DOUBTS AND DIFFICULTIES OF THE
GENERAL—FULL POWERS—DESPAIRING COMMUNICA-
TION—THE SHEEP GO DOWN TO THE SLAUGHTER—
MARCH ON THE MAHDI'S STRONGHOLD.

NOTWITHSTANDING the repeated warnings on the part of Her Majesty's Government that they did not hold themselves in any degree responsible for the military operations in the Soudan ; in face of the deficit to the Egyptian Treasury of £200,000 on the Soudan in ordinary times, not to speak of periods of war ; in spite of the fact that the soldiers were crying for the arrears of pay, that General Hicks had estimated the cost for six months to the Treasury of warlike operations with the existing attacking force, exclusive of transport, at £120,000, that money could not be collected from the inhabitants of the Soudan for fear of creating bad feeling and scattering the seeds of rebellion broadcast, and contrary to the well-known truth that the resources of the Treasury would not permit of adequate disbursement for present requirements ; apart from the dispiriting prospects for the future, financially everywhere clearly discernible, the Council in Egypt, composed exclusively of native administrators, decided, on the 11th

June, 1883, to despatch reinforcements to General Hicks, consisting of four companies, about 400 men, from Dongola; two companies of 200 men previously destined for Harar, 600 Bashi-Bazouks, a mountain battery, with 70 men; and 1,800 old soldiers, formerly with the army, then unemployed because they were rejected by General Baker for insufficient height or other defects, the cost to the end of the year in pay, rations, and transport, standing at £40,000. The Ministry were of opinion that they could not refuse this further demand made upon them at "General Hicks' urgent request," deciding that should the renewed efforts not end the rebellion, the whole question of what was to be done in the Soudan must be reconsidered.

Sir E. B. Malet, in reporting the resolve of the Egyptian Ministry, said "the Ministers are of opinion that they are too committed now to prejudice the effort in the course of being made, solely from the consideration of £40,000, and this view appears to be reasonable."

Read in the light of the following telegraphic message from General Hicks, at Khartoum (and dated a fortnight prior to the final and momentous resolve of the Egyptian Council to Earl Dufferin), no little colour is given to the decision:—"Khartoum, May 25th, 1883. The rebels so long around Duem have dispersed. No bodies of them are now on the western bank. Senaar is pacified. I withdraw the army to Khartoum. I have met and pardoned many chiefs. Two influential chiefs, I hope, will meet me at Duem; afterwards the last two battalions will meet me at Duem. On Blue Nile, Senaar and Wald Medini will be garrisoned. I have come to Khartoum for a day to see the Governor-General about many matters, especially to arrange about establishing friendly relations with the Kaba tribes, which is most important. Many thanks for your lordship's letter, with reference to which I would mention that the garrison at Darfur are still at their post. From all inquiries I have made I am inclined to think that the rebellion was almost entirely a religious

movement. I also believe that the Mahdi is losing many of his supporters, and the belief in him is rapidly diminishing."

If it should be supposed that this message of Hicks exonerates the Council of Ministers to a large degree, let it be remembered that Hicks had asked for a force of 10,000 fighting men, whereas he was empowered to proceed with only 3,000 reinforcements—1,800 of whom had been rejected by Baker Pasha on various grounds—to the 3,000 he stated he could count upon for active operations after arrangements for convoys, a chain of communications, and the garrisoning of forts!

Of course, the General's message announcing what he believed to be the subsidence of the rebellion and the strength and force allowed him will be read side by side.

Still communicating officially with Sir Edward B. Malet, and evidently suspicious of something known best to himself—possibly he had begun to entertain a distaste for the expedition to which he was committed, considering the medley he had to lead into the regions of Senaar—General Hicks urgently requested that distinct orders be sent that all directions he gave, especially as regarded the organization of forces collecting, as also for all military arrangements for and during the campaign, be obeyed. If this were not done his presence would be of no use, and he begged to suggest he might be recalled. Lord Granville replied through Sir E. B. Malet:—"Foreign Office, August 8th, 1883. Sir,—It appears from your despatch of the 1st ult. that General Hicks continues to communicate with you respecting the financial difficulties which he meets with in the Soudan, under the impression that you will exert your influence with the Egyptian Government to induce them to give favourable consideration to his wishes. I need not remind you that Her Majesty's Government assume no responsibility whatever in regard to the conduct of affairs in the Soudan, and it is desirable that General Hicks should understand that, although they are

glad to receive information as to the progress of the campaign, it is their policy to abstain as much as possible from interference with the action of the Egyptian Government in that quarter.—I am, &c.”

At the beginning of August, General Hicks was accorded the fullest powers by Chérif Pasha to carry out the plans of the impending campaign, and on the 18th August Hicks was officially appointed Commander-in-Chief in the Soudan, with the rank of General of Division. Sir E. Malet congratulated General Hicks on his promotion and appointment, saying that he had to thank the Egyptian Government alone, Her Majesty's Government interfering as little as possible with affairs in the Soudan.

Difficulties multiplied day by day upon the devoted head of General Hicks, and enumerating them now, long after the time in which he was seemingly distracted with them, and the terrible forebodings, one can easily read between the lines, and cannot but express the deepest commiseration for him as he completes his final arrangements for setting out on the ill-fated expedition. Remembering the brave soldier's position, and the connections between the events of August, September, and October, 1883, no semblance of a charge of prolixity in this part of our history will surely be thought of.

However, on August 5th, Hicks telegraphed to Sir Evelyn Wood, then appointed to administer the army, asking him to favour him with impressing on the Egyptian War Minister the necessity for seeing that money was sent to him for payment of troops on the Blue Nile, and he continued in plaintive and almost despairing accents: —“The men at Kerkoj are 25 months in arrear of pay, and at Fazoglu nine months, and have neither clothes nor food; they cannot get very much from the country, as they are surrounded by rebel villages. The men have shown a spirit of insubordination, which is not to be wondered at. It is very difficult to provide food for them at Fazoglu, and I do not know how to remedy this. They

are so far off, and steamer cannot get there. I shall try to withdraw them as far as Kerkoj, but the Mudir of Fazoglu, who has left the place in a small boat and come here, says the men were reduced to the last extremities, and it is quite probable that now they have either starved or joined the rebels. The withdrawal will be difficult, as they are 300 men, with 600 women and children, and having to pass through an enemy's country; £80,000 for arrears was promised, but none received yet. If the Government will forego the $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. charged for bills on Cairo, I could get money from merchants here. I sent a staff officer to Senaar to report on matters, and he has returned. Soldiers of the irregular troops have positively refused to go where ordered in consequence of not having been paid. There is neither money nor transport with the army on the Blue Nile. They have no grain from Wad-el-Medina to Fazoglu. They require me to send steamer from here to take up grain for them. I want all myself—in fact I want more, to bring up reinforcements and supplies for Kordofan column. If money is sent to Senaar camels can be bought, but it will take time. Camels ought to be kept for the force of 6,000 men there; they have none whatever. If I must now deprive myself of a steamer urgently required here, if I am to keep the Blue Nile army from starving, I despair of ever getting my column ready. As at present it has been arranged, it would take 45 days from now to get the reinforcements from Berber. I must try if I can expedite this. It is quite probable that after the season opens the Arabs in Senaar will break out again; the flies will have gone, they will have gathered their crops, and they will be free to move where they like. Our column will have gone to Kordofan; and to keep Senaar in order there will be this army on the Blue Nile, without money and without transport. It is almost impossible to contend against all these adverse conditions. To-day, the first time, I have heard of the

condition of the Fazoglu garrison, although the Mudir says he has reported frequently. The garrison was left by Abdul Kader. Taking into consideration the whole state of affairs in this country, I am convinced that it would be best to keep the two rivers and province of Senaar, and wait for Kordofan to settle itself."

Again, August 7th, Hicks telegraphed that the Mahdi had sent several dervishes to stir up the tribes, which were preparing to rise; some did rise at once near About (where 800 Egyptians were stationed), and also at Messelemiah (containing 800 troops), both in the province of Senaar, throughout which was much excitement. Unhappy Hicks concludes:—"I would now point out the difficulties I am in. There is no money and no transport whatever on the garrison on either side the White or Blue Nile. I have to use for these columns the transport for the Kordofan column. Transport would be purchased and kept with all the garrisons on both sides the rivers, to enable them to move if necessary. The men must also be paid. We have no money. A good deal is required, and that immediately. Pray represent this."

And so the sheep were led to the slaughter to El Obeid Moloch, a gathering that was augmented to over 10,000 human beings ere it had proceeded very far into the interior, and which made the butchery all the more demoniacal. After leaving Khartoum, it would appear, the destination of the troops was altered, for instead of confining their attention to Senaar, they had to march farther inland, to El Obeid in Kordofan, where the Mahdi had made important captures and had vastly strengthened his position, summoning to his standards at the same time scores of thousands of fanatical hordes—300,000 (?) in all.

Mr. O'Donovan, the noted war correspondent in the Soudan, had a presentiment of disaster when accompanying the expedition in the Soudan. Writing to a friend in Dublin, he said he had sad misgivings as to what would

happen to the expedition. "Should I come out of this, my eighth campaign," he said, "I shall certainly begin to think I was not born to be killed in battle." Before leaving England, Mr. O'Donovan made a will disposing of the money received by him from the publishers of his work on Merv.

The following letter from Mr. Frank Vizetelly, an artist who has been sending sketches of the expedition to the *Graphic*, appeared in that paper. The letter is dated Duem, Kordofan, the 24th of September:—"We have just done 12 days' march through the disaffected districts between here and Khartoum; to-morrow we strike into the interior to Obeid. A steamer is just leaving here for Khartoum, by which I send sketches, a letter will be forwarded by the next. After that there will be no further communication until we have beaten the Mahdi and taken Obeid, or have been beaten ourselves and driven back to the banks of the Nile. Behind us as we march forward the tribes will close the route."

The expedition arrived in due course at Duem, from whence Mr. O'Donovan wrote to a friend, while seized with sad forebodings:—"We arrived here (camp of El Duem) three days ago after a 12 days' march, and are preparing to start again towards a place 230 miles in the interior to attack the Mahdi, Mohammed Ahmed. We are 11,000 strong, and with no end of artillery and cavalry, but the enemy is double that strength, and holds very strong positions. After to-morrow we march, and, in six or seven days after, expect to have a sanguinary engagement. All the expeditions which preceded us during the past two years have been defeated with disaster. Let us hope ours won't share the same fate." After referring to the death of an intimate friend, the letter continues:—"I shall sadly miss him when I return to London, if I ever do. I am writing this under circumstances which bring me almost as near to death as it is possible to be without being under absolute sentence of execution, or in the

throes of some deadly malady, and yet I speak of poor — as if I were going to live for ever. It would be odd if the next intelligence from this part of the world told that I, too, had gone the way of all flesh. However, to die even out here, with a lancehead as big as a shovel through me, will meet my views better than the slow, gradual sinking into the grave, which is the lot of so many. You must know that here we are 1,500 miles away south of Cairo, in the midst of a wild, almost unexplored country. The Egyptian army, with which I am here camped on the banks of the Nile, will have but one chance given them — one tremendous pitched battle. The enemy we have to meet are as courageous and fierce as the Zulus, and much better armed; and our army is that which ran away before a handful of British troops at Tel-el-Kebir. We are obliged to march in square, with our baggage and water camels, 5,000 in number, in our midst, lest the enemy's cavalry surprise us. In this guise we can march only 10 miles a day, for after 12 the heat becomes frightful, as we are not far from the Equator. Thus it takes us four days to get from one set of wells to another. Then, perhaps, when we get to where water ought to be, we find the wells filled up with stones and earth, or mayhap rotting bodies of men and camels. Then we have to go rightabout face back again to where we came from, with the enemy's cavalry hanging on our flank all the time, and watching an opportunity to make a dash at us. You know I am by this time, after an experience of many years, pretty well accustomed to dangers of most kinds, even some extra. Yet I assure you I feel it terrible to face deadly peril far away from civilized ideas, and where no mercy is to be met with, in company with cravens that you expect to see run at every moment, and who will leave you behind to face the worst." In another letter, written a little earlier than the foregoing one, Mr. O'Donovan said:—"The Mahdi is mustering all his men to meet us, for we march out shortly to fight a decisive battle. I am greatly afraid

we shall get the worst of it, and then not a man will escape."

The same correspondent wrote on the 20th Sept. that there was no sign of the submission of the rebels, and that much anxiety was felt about the water supply inland. The heat was intense, and there was considerable loss of life among the camels during the march. Three days later, after mentioning the seizure of a water-station, he went on to say that the enemy were reported to be 30,000 strong at Obeid. The circuitous water-route to this place was, he said, at least a month's march, and that much loss from sickness, thirst, and hardship might be expected. The utmost vigilance would be required, and hard fighting necessary in order to secure a successful result. All were, however, in the best of spirits, despite the serious difficulties to be overcome. On the 30th, dated from the entrenched camp, 30 miles south-west of El Duem, he records that a change of plans had taken place. In consequence of the Governor-General's report of the number of Arab tribes which returned on the line of march, and the difficulty of inducing small bodies of troops to escort stores, the plan of establishing a line of fortified posts in order to maintain communication with the base of the Nile has been abandoned. "The army," says the telegram, "is advancing as rapidly as possible to Obeid, in order to press on a decided action." He goes on to say :—"The camels are daily dying in considerable numbers, but we hope to be able to carry all the biscuits to the end ; otherwise, and if grain be not captured, retreat to the Nile would be necessary. The enemy, 12,000 strong, are reported to be close by. They have sent a force to prevent the expected junction of the friendly Tegelli Arabs." The message, which was of considerable length, goes on to describe the great precautions taken on the line of march to prevent surprise, and proceeds :—"So far water has been found, mostly on the surface, in the ground depressions. It is hoped for throughout. There will be no communication with the external world for the next few

weeks, as for the moment we practically burn our ships." The last message received from the correspondent from Sange Hamferid Camp, 45 miles south-west of El Duem, the 10th of October, was as follows:—"We have halted for the past three days, owing to the uncertainty of the water supply in front. Here we are entirely dependent on surface pools. A reconnaissance of 30 miles forward yesterday by Colonel Farquhar ascertained that the pools were barely sufficient for a rapid march to the village of Sarakna, now deserted, where there are a few wells. The enemy is still retiring, and sweeping the country bare of cattle. The uncut harvest supplies ample forage. The water supply is cause of intense anxiety. The camels are dropping. The troops are well." In a private letter, accompanying the last telegram, Mr. O'Donovan said:—"I send a long telegram about the general state of things, which for the moment is exceedingly disagreeable, as the prevailing opinion is that we are running a terrible risk in abandoning communications with our base on the Nile, and marching 230 miles into the most unknown country."

When the latest despatches ever received from Hicks were sent off, he and his followers were well advanced in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. The General wrote:—

"Camp near Sarakhouah, October 3.—Leaving Duem to march by Khorebnel to Melbeis and Obeid, I decided that the line of communication should be secured, and posts left in the forts at Shat, Zeraiga, Sarakhna, Nourabi, Agula, Johan, Abli Beliah, Amelsceikh, Rahad, Kasghib, and Melbeis. There is water at these places, and quantities of biscuits were to arrive from Duem. A thousand camels were ordered to be purchased and forwarded from Duem. Biscuits and ammunition would be forwarded from post to post, dépôts be formed, and a line of retreat secured, and, in the event of a reverse, the troops would find supplies. We marched to Shat and formed the first dépôt. I was informed by the Governor of the Soudan that it

would be useless to expect supplies. The soldiers at the posts would be afraid to guard the convoys, the Arabs would close the rear, and the posts would not be strong enough. He requested me to abandon the idea, but to advance with the army with fifty days' food. I was adverse to this, but as the Governor assures me the posts will not be supplied from the base at Duem, I should weaken the force. I therefore called a council. The opinion was that the Arabs would collect in the rear, so that we could not rely on supplies, and the posts would be a source of weakness. Two thousand would be taken for the posts, leaving the defence for the garrisons. The soldiers would be disinclined to leave with the convoys. Hussein wishes to retain the posts half-way to Obeid, but says the Government must send troops from Cairo. A battalion must come to Khartoum escorting provisions. Time does not allow troops to be sent from Cairo, Khartoum is too weak. Abbas is of opinion that the posts must be abandoned. Colonel Farquhar is of the same opinion." Hicks Pasha, in a telegram dated the 17th October, sent by hand to Khartoum, said:—"The army is 20 miles from Nourabi. We have depended on the pools of rain water. Fortunately we have found by reconnaissances that water is ensured as far as Sarakhoua. The guide's information is vague. I regret abandoning the intention of establishing posts and a line of communication. The Governor-General informs me that the Arabs will close in after the army has passed and prevent supplies; besides, the pools will dry up. Water is not obtainable, except by digging wells. There is no information regarding Sarakna Normba, nor the supply there. This causes anxiety. I quite expected the enemy at Sarakna, but by a reconnaissance I found the place evacuated. The health of the troops is good. This is fortunate, as there are no sick to carry. The heat is intense."

CHAPTER VI.

AN OMINOUS SILENCE—FEARS IN ENGLAND AND EGYPT—
DEFEAT OF THE FALSE PROPHET—ANOTHER CLOUD—
RENEWED SUSPENSE—WHISPERINGS OF CALAMITY
—THE WORST DOUBTS CONFIRMED—HICKS' FORCE
ANNIHILATED—THE GENERAL AND HIS STAFF KILLED
—TERRIBLE SLAUGHTER NEAR EL OBEID—REJOICINGS
OF THE REBELS—GRAPHIC DETAILS—PANIC IN EGYPT.

THE silence of the tomb had fallen upon General Hicks and his army of 10,000 men, moderately well equipped and having with them 6,000 camels, though having to swelter under a sun marking 160 degrees, with a commissariat scarcely worth the name, and provision for the sick ditto. Men at home could do nothing but speculate. That their rear had been closed up by the ever-multiplying rebels went without saying. That they were surrounded was also pretty generally admitted, else something would have been heard from official sources of the progress of the campaign. Military experts shook their heads; civilians who took an interest in the Soudan upheaval were uneasy. All had an idea of the fearful difficulties and overwhelming odds against which Hicks had to cope, in addition to an actual battle.

Sir Samuel Baker, who had had a wide practical experience of the Soudan, was among the principal of those who made their voice heard in this season of doubt

and dread. Having begun by saying General Hicks was instructed to act against Senaar, and to prevent the rebels crossing the White Nile into Kordofan, in which he was successful, and that subsequently he received orders from the Minister of War to march upon El Obeid, about 220 miles inland on the west, where he was to attack the Mahdi in his strongest position, Sir Samuel continued:—

“I always regarded this advance with grave misgiving, as it was fraught with dangers that were beyond control. It was well known that Egyptian troops could not be depended upon unless formed into a square to resist a close attack. With a line of march through deserts devoid of water or supplies, where 5,000 or 6,000 camels were required for transport, it would be impossible to protect so extended an array of animals without a force far in excess of the 7,000 men which formed the General’s army. An attack upon the baggage train, which must have occupied at least four miles, would have effectually prevented the formation of a square, and the troops would have been thrown into confusion. Unless the enemy was too contemptible for consideration, their task was easy in such an inhospitable country—to fall back before the advancing army, destroying all wells, and driving off all herds, thus compelling the advancing force to consume their own supplies, wearing them out by a distress for water, until camels should die of thirst and men grow weak and thoroughly disheartened. As the invaders would penetrate inland, the wells would be filled up in their rear and retreat prevented; when thoroughly demoralized by thirst and fatigue, the force would be led by faithless guides into a perconcerted difficulty where the enemy would have occupied an impregnable position, and an attack would be made upon all sides that would necessitate the formation of a square. Thus surrounded, without a chance of escape, but forced upon the defensive, without water, in a sun that must be felt to be understood, the end would be destruction.”

Ultimately, three soldiers entered Khartoum from Duem after an entire absence of news for over a month. They stated that one day from 25,000 to 30,000 Arabs were found encamped near Hicks Pasha, on the Khor-el-Nil, a torrent three leagues from El Obeid. Next morning the Arabs divided themselves into two columns, and attacked the Egyptian square on two sides, thus permitting Hicks Pasha to make use of his 6,000 Remingtons, and all his Krupp, Nordenfeldt, and rocket batteries. The Arabs, who were armed with lances only, failing after some time to reach the square, fled, leaving 8,000 of their number killed, all their women, food and baggage animals. The Mahdi himself was not present at the battle. Hicks Pasha pursued the main body of the fugitives, and overtook them at Melbas, where he found the Mahdi posted with the fugitives, and 2,000 cavalry his body guard. The Arabs again attacked, and were defeated with great loss, the horse of the Mahdi being killed. The Mahdi was reported to have been cut down by the light cavalry sent out in pursuit. The Arabs then fled to El Obeid. This town was at once closely invested by Hicks Pasha, who was master of the country around, and had established his headquarters at Melbas, two miles from the besieged city. On the 4th October, the Arabs report Hicks Pasha was in full possession of the town and of the Government Treasury, the Egyptian loss having been nil.

This was gratifying intelligence indeed; it served to dispel the awful suspense felt by onlookers far and wide, and gave abundant hope that with Hicks Pasha and his expedition all might yet be well. Alas, that the promise of the new-born day was to be blighted, and that there should have ensued a gloom deeper and blacker than any that had hitherto been endured.

In the first instance news of a dire and distressing character began to be whispered abroad, and eventually reached Lower Egypt in this form: A camel driver stated that after the success of Hicks Pasha, the army directed

its course towards Kashgil, and after four hours' march the rebels surprised them, and directed against them a well-sustained fire. The troops suffered much from thirst; nevertheless, they fought all day. On Monday morning, the 5th November, the combat having ceased, the army went towards the wells, but after half-an-hour's march, the rebels who were hidden in the forest surrounded the troops and fired upon them, which was answered by the Egyptians in an energetic fashion. Towards noon the rebels made a general charge with guns and other weapons; the whole army perished except 200 Egyptian soldiers and some negro servants, of whom some were wounded. The camel driver was taken up wounded and sent to Birkeh, where he found the Mahdi, and remained a fortnight, whence he sought refuge in flight, arriving at Khartoum on the 15th December.

For some time, the accounts were conflicting, affording hope, only to be alternated by the worst suppositions. For instance, one half of Hicks' army was said to have escaped scathless. Of the emissaries sent out to obtain information, one only returned to say he saw the Egyptian guns in the hands of the rebels, and also witnessed a religious ceremony held in honour of the victory, stating that a Mr. Frank Vizetelly, an artist to one of the London illustrated papers, the *Graphic*, was the only European saved. To confirm this a Copt, disguised as a dervish, and who was an eye-witness of the slaughter, said the Mahdi advanced from Kordofan with a force estimated at 300,000. One half of Hicks Pasha's army was advancing on El Obeid, the other half waiting to check the Mahdi at Kaz, east of El Obeid. On November 2nd, the Mahdi met the first half, which was soon afterwards joined by the other, the entire Egyptian force numbering about 7,000. A square was formed and the rebels lost a great many men in attacking it. Fighting went on till the 4th November, when the Mahdi at last brought up some well armed troops from Kordofan, and

Hicks Pasha's army was destroyed. One European and some 50 men were supposed to have escaped. The Copt added that Mr. Power, an artist, was the European who survived, a statement which again gave rise to speculation, the former messenger having described the survivor as Mr. Vizetelly. However, Mr. Power settled this point by reaching Khartoum and telegraphing to Cairo confirming news of the disaster. Mr. Power wired that Hicks Pasha, believing the enemy to have been routed, accepted the guidance of an emissary of the Mahdi, who led him into the defile where the army was attacked. Mr. Power added that Major Coetlogan—who had been instructed to officiate in Khartoum—and himself were the only two Englishmen left in the Soudan, there being no certainty that Mr. Vizetelly was alive, or that Mr. O'Donovan was living. Egypt was not safe, he said, above the second cataract, great excitement prevailing everywhere. It was thought the Mahdi would advance on Khartoum and into Upper Egypt—a conjecture that proved, at length, only too true.

The report that one half of Hicks' army was saved was disposed of by the statement that the army was divided, marching in different directions, and that after slaughtering one half, the Mahdi had disposed of the other. However, the following account from a Greek merchant, who had escaped from El Obeid, placed the whole affair in a painfully clear light:—

“The time General Hicks left Duem large bodies of Arabs camped each night on the place or ‘geriba’ occupied by General Hicks the night before. He frequently wished to turn and disperse these men, but Alaidin Pasha assured him that they were friends following to back up the Egyptian Army. On the sixth or seventh day General Hicks sent back a small body; they were fired upon by the Arabs, and then General Hicks again insisted that these men should be dispersed. Alaidin refused, and General Hicks then drew his sword

and threw it on the ground, saying that he resigned and would no longer be responsible if the Governor-General did not permit his orders to be obeyed. General Hicks said that, from the time he left Duem, Alaidin caused his orders to be disobeyed. After some time he was persuaded to resume the command, but things went on as before, the body of Arabs in rear always growing larger. After some small engagements Kashgil was reached. Here an ambuscade had been formed for days, the guide having been told to lead the army thither. When the Arabs opened fire from behind rocks and trees they were wholly concealed, and the guns in position could fire with impunity. Six days before Gustave Klootz had joined the Mahdi. The shells and bullets of the Egyptians were harmless, so thick were the rocks and trees. General Hicks wheeled his army to gain the open, but found the defile blocked by Alaidin's so-called friends, the Arabs, who had been following him for days. These had got into cover and opened fire on the army. The Arabs from behind their cover kept up a fire for three days, and in the whole affair lost no more than from 270 to 300 men. The Egyptian soldiers were then lying on the ground, dying, or in convulsions from thirst, and the Arabs found them in groups of 20 or so unable to rise. They were all speared on the ground. General Hicks' staff and escort had water, and were in a group on horseback. When the Arabs came out of cover General Hicks charged, leading his staff and shooting down all the rebels in his way. They galloped past towards a sheikh supposed by the Egyptians to be the Mahdi. General Hicks rushed on him with his sword, and cut his face and arm; the man had on a Darfur steel-mail shirt. Just then a club thrown struck General Hicks on the head, and unhorsed him; the horses of the staff were speared, but the officers fought on foot till all were killed. General Hicks was the last to die. The Mahdi was not in the battle, but came to see General Hicks' body. As each sheikh passed he

pierced it with his lance, an Arab custom, that he might say he assisted in his death. The brother of M. Constantino was killed fighting for General Hicks in El Obeid. The Mahdi has a large standing army, 35,000 paid men, but in three days can get 300,000. All believe him to be the Mahdi. Priests, nuns, and merchants are free, but cannot leave the town. Mr. Vizetelly is not alive; the description of Gustave Klotz answered to him. Thus it was first believed here that the survivor was Mr. Vizetelly. The Mahdi has Krupp and Nordenfeldt ammunition."

An Arab rumour gained credence that there were dissensions between General Hicks and Alaidin Pasha, his principal subordinate, and his superior prior to the battle, and that these dissensions were known to all, General Hicks, according to the rumour, was weary of waiting near the water at Melbais. Alaidin Pasha refused to move further, because there was no water, and half the army went over to him, and refused to obey Hicks. The General pushed ahead, therefore, with all his European staff, artillery, and 7,000 or 8,000 men, was attacked in ambush, and fought for three days, not having a drop of water or a reserve cartridge; all were wiped out. Alaidin and his party, who stood by the water and stores, were afterwards attacked, and fought every day until annihilated.

At last any lingering hope that had been entertained as to the safety of a substantial portion of Hicks' army vanished into thin air; indeed, one Stone Pasha, who had had considerable experience in the Soudan, openly remarked that he had anticipated nothing else but disaster, he himself having refused the command on the ground that the Egyptian Government declined to give him a complete army corps of 27,000 men!

As may be easily imagined, the decisive overthrow of Hicks Pasha's army increased the prestige of the Mahdi tremendously. Tribes that had been wavering, and who had stood aloof in order to throw in their lot with the

stoutest party, Egyptian or rebel, hesitated no longer. They proclaimed for the Mahdi, and howled anathemas at the heads of the Power to which they had previously sworn constant fidelity. Garrisons still holding out under circumstances sufficient to test iron nerves began to tremble at their probable fate, caravan routes from the interior of Africa to ports on the Red Sea coast were closed, hundreds, nay thousands of people fled from Khartoum, and for weeks the city was given up to panic. Soldiers impressed for the relief of the nearest forts were reluctant to hurl themselves against the growing might of Mohammed Ahmed, and even further north than Berber fear was expressed that the tribes in the whole district would be overwhelmed unless they were prepared to assure him of their fealty. Nothing short of a march by the Mahdi on Upper Egypt was expected.

That the Mahdi would be content with the conquest of the Soudan was not dreamed of. There were rumours that Colonel de Coetlogan, in command at Khartoum, was to be ordered to fall back on Berber, that the troops quartered there, 4,000, were not strong enough to hold it, that the city was never guarded against treachery. Baker Pasha had been asked by the Government to send 1,000 men of the gendarmerie to Suakim to clear the desert; he had consented, but now recommended that they should be retained in Upper Egypt, owing to the latest news. Fears were expressed concerning a native rising, and English troops were demanded in various directions.

Briefly, panic prevailed on every hand.

CHAPTER VII.

EVER-INCREASING TROUBLES—RISING IN THE EASTERN SOUDAN—OSMAN DIGNA—DEFEAT OF THE REBELS—VICTORY OF OSMAN—THE BRITISH CONSUL KILLED—DISAFFECTION AMONG THE TRIBES—DEPREDACTIONS NEAR SUAKIM—ANOTHER DEFEAT OF THE EGYPTIANS—TOKAR AND SINKAT IN PERIL—GRAVE POSITION OF AFFAIRES—THE BRITISH ARMY OF OCCUPATION—BAKER PASHA—NEW ARMY CONSTITUTED FROM THE GENDARMERIE—CRITICAL SITUATION.

Stratum super stratum, troubles multiplied with amazing rapidity.

Riots had occurred at Port Said, Abyssinians had committed belligerent acts, and now, at the close of the year 1883, when Kordofan and Senaar were wholly given up to anarchy, and when the more northern parts of the Soudan were threatened by the Mahdi's legions, a revolt furthered in the Red Sea littoral had assumed alarming proportions. In the autumn of the year disturbances were created at Sinkat and Erkowiet, a few miles north-west and south from Suakim, an important station on the Red Sea coast, and in what is known as the Littoral; and inquiries revealed that Osman Digna, a slave-dealer, and his two nephews, Ahmet and Figna Digna, had raised five tribes at least in the name of the Mahdi. Tewfik Bey had requested the presence of Osman, who refused to

come to him ; but he arrived afterwards with some 1,500 men, and demanded, in the name of Mohammed Ahmed, Sinkat and Suakim, with what they contained of arms and money. The brazen demands of the rebel were scouted, of course ; whereupon he attacked the Suakim houses, and was repulsed after fighting an hour, his nephews being killed, with 63 other revolutionists. The survivors then cut the telegraph wires, threatened Tokar, and entrenched themselves at Erkowiet.

As Osman Digna was the first of the insurgent chiefs to come in contact with the British, it will not be out of place if we present a few details touching him and his career at this point.

The family of Osman Digna, then, were previously rich and influential, but on the abolition of the slave trade they suffered some severe losses, and some of them were imprisoned for being implicated in dealing in slaves, and the family gradually became poor and in debt. In 1877 a brother of Osman was caught by a British ship with nearly a hundred slaves in his charge, which occasioned a serious loss to the family, and which roused a bad spirit against us in their breasts. Osman soon afterwards settled as a banker in Berber, and his business led him in 1882 to the Red Sea coast, to the vicinity of Sinkat, whence he went inland to Khartoum, subsequently proceeding to Kordofan, where, there was reason to suppose, he had a conference with the Mahdi, who had proclaimed his "divine mission" in the previous year.

We next hear of him stirring up the tribes in the Sinkat district and various parts of the Red Sea littoral. How inauspicious was his entry into conflict with the Egyptians we have just recorded. Undeterred, Osman continued his endeavours to increase strife ; and becoming dangerous again, Tewfik Bey, with a force of 250 men, left Sinkat, and attacked the rebels at Ghabbat, killed about fifty of them, confiscated ivory, burned grain and over a dozen huts. The followers of Osman Digna were reduced to

seventy or eighty, though his persistency was again displayed; and being unmolested by the authorities, he had opportunities he did not fail to profit by. Having collected an augmented following, he surprised a body of reinforcements on their way to Sinkat, and destroyed them all save twenty-five men. From this date Osman's influence increased; tribes returned to him, he fixed his headquarters at Tamanieb, went to Teb, on the way to Tokar, and gradually approached the port of Suakim, then of no special importance as a town. Several sheikhs round about Tokar joined in the revolt at the instigation of Osman, and commenced operations for securing Tokar, then held by Egyptian troops, a place of great utility in the defence of the Eastern Soudan, well supplied with food, and admirably situated.

Informed of the condition of affairs, of the serious spread of the rebellion in the Red Sea littoral, Mahmoud Takar Pasha, who had been appointed Governor of the troops in the Egyptian Soudan at the end of October, and who had been preparing a force for Sinkat, changed his plans, deciding that it would be better to relieve Tokar first; and on the 3rd November, an expedition, consisting of some 500 men, made up of infantry, mounted Bashi-Bazouks, with one gun, set out for the beleaguered city under Mahmoud. In his capacity as British Consul, Commander Moncrieff, also four Greeks, started with them. The troops were landed at Tokar on the 4th November, and the men were drawn up in square. They marched on to oppose the rebels, and meeting them in the desert at Tamanieb, and twenty miles from Suakim, a fight was at once begun. Shots were fired about noon, but continued for a short time only, owing to the Bashi-Bazouks breaking up helplessly and falling back upon the infantry, composed mainly of Soudini negroes, who had been holding their ground steadily, and fighting the enemy opposed to them with admirable courage. The blacks were thrown into tumult by the cowardice of the Bashi-Bazouks and

the Egyptian infantry, and at the same time they were furiously assailed by 3,000 Arabs. The negroes fought desperately. They stood back to back in groups and in pairs, grasping their muskets by the barrel, and swinging them like clubs, or standing firm, with fixed bayonets, against the onset of lance, sword, and shield. Many of the rebels were slain, but a general rout ensued among the Egyptian force, not more than 45 survivors remaining to tell the tale; Consul Moncrieff (who had been telegraphed for by the English authorities to return at once, but who did not receive the telegram) and the Greeks died, fighting bravely, surrounded by the rebels.

The second loss in the Eastern Soudan, on the part of the Government, caused the whole of the tribes to go over to Osman Digna, the Government not being strong enough to support them.

Nor was this all.

On the 26th November a steamer left Massowah, which had become more tranquil after showing signs of great uneasiness, with a regiment of black troops, with the intention of being joined to another force to make a second attempt at the relief of Tokar; but on the 2nd December Mahmoud, the Commander-in-Chief, sent them out with 225 Egyptians and Bashi-Bazouks to make a reconnaissance in the direction of Tamanieb. They were badly officered, however, and having no advanced guards nor scouts, were led into a defile surrounded by several thousand rebels. The blacks fought as the others had done near Tokar, back to back, with splendid valour; but the Government force was simply cut to pieces, for out of 700 men who left Suakim in the morning, only fifteen cavalry, two staff officers, and eighteen infantry were left alive.

In addition to these three serious defeats, the Egyptians at Suakim had suffered somewhat by the bold depredations of Osman Digna's men.

Writing to Sir E. Baring, at Cairo, on the situation,

an indignant and disgusted resident at Suakim said: "The state of affairs here can hardly be believed, and my nine years' experience of the country could never have led me to believe that it was possible the Egyptian officials could bring about the present state of affairs. That they have done so is a perfect fact, and it is simply their own ignorance, negligence, or wickedness, whichever it may be, that has brought the Soudan into the horrible state it is now." After recounting the three defeats of the Egyptian troops, the correspondent complained that Mahmoud, the commander, had left the expedition in the hands of Nubian troops; that he had allowed the men to go without transport; that he had sent out no supports; that he had sat at home doing nothing. Before these men were cut up Mahmoud had 1,700 troops to relieve Tokar and Sinkat. At the latter place Tewfik Bey had sent in word he was nearly starving, and could not hold out. There had been something criminal in the behaviour of Suleiman Pasha Mazi, the Governor-General of the Eastern Soudan, and Mahmoud, the General. They had ignored all local influence; had quarrelled with the camel sheikhs, who did the whole of the transport; had not accepted their services; had not tried to conciliate any of the men that might have been won over; and had lost the confidence of every one.

As a fact, Mahmoud, who was characterised by Sir E. Baring as a most incapable commander, was withdrawn, a commission was sent to Suakim to inquire into his conduct, and it was decided to try him by court-martial at Cairo. A British man-of-war remained in the Suakim harbour. Colonel Harrington and Majors Giles and Holroyd examined the fortifications, when it was found that they were wholly insufficient, and that the town and camp on the mainland might be "rushed" at any time by the enemy, who still hovered around to frighten the wretched fellows supposed to be doing duty under the Government. Almost every one of the friendly tribes cleared out,

Egyptian influence vanished, and, no further news arriving from Tokar or Sinkat, three native boats were sent as far down as Trinkitat to gain information. On attempting to land, however, they were attacked by 200 horsemen, one boat was disabled, and the messengers had to flee for their lives. By this time Suakim was the safest place of refuge right from the Suez Canal as far south as Massowah, and even at Suakim the lives of the people were not protected, non-combatants were advised to keep away, and food was scarce. Intelligence, apparently authentic, showed that Osman Digna was on the Tamanieb road with a force 7,000 strong, that the Sheikh Takir had surrounded Sinkat with 11,000 men, and that the rebels at Tokar numbered 3,000.

Under circumstances so alarming, no alternative remained but to despatch reinforcements from Cairo and Alexandria. But the difficulty was how to provide them. With nearly 10,000 men hemmed in in the garrisons south of Khartoum, with the fate of that city trembling in the balance, with Berber, Dongola, and Abu Ahmed, on the Nile, experiencing the shock of the rebellion whose wave was extending towards them; with Massowah, on the Red Sea, uncertain, the defenders of Tokar and Sinkat struggling for dear existence, with many officials weak, vacillating, and utterly untrustworthy, having had thousands upon thousands of soldiers slain in fierce combat, with the secret agents and emissaries of the Mahdi doing their work only too well in Egypt proper, with fears of a native rising within the range of possibilities, and with persistent reports that should Turkish soldiers be called upon to proceed to the Soudan they would refuse, what could the Egyptian Government do? Further, the British Army of Occupation had been gradually reduced, instructions having been sent out by Lord Granville, at the suggestion of the Egyptian Government, that the forces should be withdrawn as far as was consistent with the preservation of order, the opinion.

being that the total British force in Egypt might be brought down to two battalions of infantry, a battery of field artillery, one battery of garrison artillery, and a company of engineers, or a total of 3,000 men, under General Wood. And effect was given to this; the Cairo garrison was withdrawn and the remnants of the British Army of Occupation concentrated at Alexandria. Then there had been no reliable intelligence of the movements of the Mahdi since the 5th November, and December had arrived, but it was conjectured he was not far from Khartoum. The apprehension was expressed, too, that should he become master of the city there was no good defensible position between him and the Egyptian capital until Minieh was reached, six hours from Cairo. In fine, the longer the situation was looked at the more desperate did it appear. Even had it been possible without hitch or accident to concentrate at Khartoum all the troops available in the Soudan, they would have amounted to no more than 4,000 or 5,000 of inferior quality—not to be relied on in any sense.

In this awful dilemma—by-the-by Mr. Gladstone's Government still refused any succour or responsibility in the Soudan—the Egyptian Ministry decided to leave the Mahdi to the prosecution of his schemes in the Southern and Northern Soudan, and to act energetically with regard to the garrisons in the eastern portion of the province, to retrieve the misfortunes induced by Mahmoud's failures, and to dispose, if possible, of Osman Digna by despatching an expedition of Baker's gendarmerie to Suakim, under his sole command, he to have full civil as well as absolute military power. Colonel Sartorius, also in the Egyptian service, was chosen chief of the staff, and the 2,500 men of the expedition were drawn up for review before the Khedive. The review was followed by a remarkable incident, it was stated. The Turkish officers came in a body to Baker Pasha and plainly refused to go to the Soudan, on the plea that their contract

was for service in Egypt alone. This most serious step on their part was quite unexpected. None of the Egyptian officers declined to proceed to the Eastern Soudan, but it is significant that they wept on learning their destination. There could be no doubt, a correspondent stated, the gendarmerie had been very hardly treated, for while bearing the suffering and brunt of hard work entailed by a scourge in the shape of a cholera outbreak, they were comforted by the assurance that thenceforth they would be employed as a purely civil force; but now, on the first emergency, they found themselves being used as the only available force for the defence of Egypt against the Mahdi, whilst the army took over the civil duties. The feeling had always been that being sent to the Soudan was equivalent to death, and recent events had certainly not tended to diminish the impression.

CHAPTER VIII.

PROPOSED RELIEF OF TOKAR AND SINKAT—THE SOUDAN AND ITS ABANDONMENT—RESIGNATION OF THE EGYPTIAN MINISTRY—ENGLAND STILL POWERFUL—AWFUL STRAITS OF THE GARRISONS—BAKER PASHA'S ARMY ON THE MARCH—DESPERATE ONSLAUGHT BY THE ARABS—ROUT OF THE EGYPTIANS WITH GREAT LOSS—COWARDICE—FLIGHT TO SUAKIM.

WHILE Baker Pasha was perfecting his arrangements for the relief of Tokar and Sinkat and the security of Suakim from attacks by the adherents of Osman Digna, and, through him, the Mahdi, the grave questions of the hour were engaging the thoughts of the British Government and of the Egyptian Ministry, the latter of whom were superseded in January, 1884, by the Cabinet of Nubar Pasha. The most prominent of the points that arose for discussion was whether the Soudan should not be abandoned, except the district comprised in the Red Sea littoral—whether those still faithful to Egyptian rule should not be rescued ere the opportunity had passed away. The whole of Kordofan was lost to the Egyptian Government, Senaar was all but gone, and Generals Stephenson, Wood, and Baker agreed that if the Mahdi really advanced it would be impossible for the Egyptian Government to hold Khartoum, their reason for the conclusion being that the garrison was demoralised, that they

had little or no confidence in the fighting qualities of the soldiers, that the Egyptian Government had no adequate reinforcements to despatch, that the difficulty of provisioning the place, whether from the north or the south, was very great, as were the difficulties of maintaining a line of communications. The British Government having declined to sanction the employment of either English or Indian troops, General Wood and General Stephenson, in particular, were of opinion that if the Egyptian Government were left to rely exclusively on its own resources, and the Mahdi advanced, Khartoum must fall. They held that an endeavour should be made to open out the Suakim-Berber route, not because the mere establishment of communications between those two places would enable the Egyptian Government to hold Khartoum permanently, but because the success of General Baker's undertaking would afford the best hopes of retreat to the garrison of Khartoum and the immediate neighbourhood.

Apart from military considerations, Sir E. Baring expressed his conviction that the country lying north of Wady Halfa, with the ports of the Red Sea, was quite as large a territory as the Egyptian Government could govern with any advantage to itself or to the population over whom they ruled. This would have embraced the abandonment of Khartoum, of course, and would have induced a fearful rush of fanatical hordes answering the Mahdi's commands.

It will not be out of place to reproduce here sentences of Sir E. Baring, considering what has transpired since they were penned on the 3rd December, 1883. The British Minister wrote to Lord Granville:—"I venture to express a hope that Her Majesty's Government will adhere steadfastly to the policy of non-interference in the affairs of the Soudan. As a natural outcome of this policy, it appears to me that neither English nor Indian troops should be employed in the Soudan, and that Sir E. Wood's army, which is officered by English officers on

the active list, should, as was originally intended by Lord Dufferin, be employed only in Egypt proper. There can, I think, be little doubt of the ultimate results of active British interference in the Soudan. Not only would it make the policy of eventually withdrawing the British garrison from Egypt a matter of extreme difficulty—I might almost say, as far as the present generation is concerned, of impossibility—but it would involve a great risk that, by force of circumstances, we should be led to establish British authority on a permanent or quasi-permanent foundation over the greater portion of the long valley of the Nile.”

Comment on this paragraph, is, in the light of more recent events, obviously unnecessary.

In truth Her Majesty's Government recommended the Egyptian Government to abandon all territory south of Assouan, or, at least, of Wady Halfa (including Khartoum and the desert by which it is approached from Cairo), expressing at the same time their willingness to assist in maintaining Egypt proper, and in defending it, as well as the ports in the Red Sea. The Ministry of Chérif Pasha were not long in meeting and discussing the proposition of Her Majesty's Government, and in replying that the Khedive was forbidden by a firman dated the 7th August, 1879, from ceding any territory, and that they could not agree to the abandonment of territories considered absolutely essential for the security and even for the existence of Egypt itself.

The two Governments disagreeing on the main point, namely, the abandonment of the Soudan, at issue, the Chérif Ministry resigned, and Nubar Pasha accepted the seals of Prime Minister, the Khedive intimating his desire for establishing friendly relations with the British.

Turning now to military operations in the Eastern Soudan, the new field force in command of Baker Pasha began to land at Suakim. Colonel Sartorius, with 650 gendarmerie disembarked on the 8th December, 1883, and

in the absence of General Baker, took over the command from Mahmoud Takir Pasha. There being only ten days' supply of flour left, and food, especially meat, having trebled in price, arrangements were made for obtaining further supplies; the defences were looked to, further security obtained by the anchoring of another British man-of-war, and by the middle of December the military strength at Suakim was 2,000 infantry and 600 cavalry, including 200 Turkish soldiers, General Baker arriving with one of the contingents landed about this period.

Advices from Tokar and Sinkat, which were to be relieved, showed that in the latter place alone there were 1,000 women and children, and that both were in sore straits, an urgent appeal coming from the former for immediate aid, no chance occurring at either place to sally out in search of provisions, so closely invested were they by thousands of the enemy.

On the 31st January, 1884, Sinkat and Tokar were still holding out, and on the 1st February Baker Pasha started from Trinkitat to attempt the relief of Tokar—a task which, while it brought no disgrace whatever upon him, nor proof of incapacity, nor anything dishonourable, stained for ever the character of the force it was his ill-fate to command, which displayed a depth of shamelessness and arrant cowardice not even suspected among the Egyptian soldiery, which has blackened their fame for ever in the eyes of all people, and which made them so contemptible in the minds of England and other Powers, that when the British came upon the scene by the terrible force of events they scorned to employ them in defending the country they had so heinously betrayed. True, the bulk of the expedition were not trained soldiers, but they had been drilled for months in a semi-military fashion, the fate of countless thousands was hanging upon their efforts, they were entrusted with a duty the Egyptian Government had relied upon them performing, their individual and collective reputation was at stake—they

were men, in form at least, and they ought to have fought for life if for nothing else, a motive-power found in the meanest insect, the puniest of living creatures. Yet they exposed themselves to a horrible butchery, would not strike for hearth, home, nor self, receiving the fatal thrusts and piercing shots of the enemy without one effort of defence or a single endeavour at retaliation, and were massacred: cut down like the corn before the swift flash of the reaping hook, inspiring something more than hope in the victors, while the prospects of their country were utterly blighted.

Starting on the 1st February, 1884, then, from Suakim to open up the road to Tokar, Baker Pasha had under him nearly 4,000 men, with four Krupp guns and two Gatlings. On the 2nd, when four miles from Trinkitat, a fort was constructed to protect the guns while crossing a number of morasses lying between the harbour and the mainland, which was occupied by a small force of infantry the same night. After passing the morasses the men were rested, and after a tranquil night the morning broke amid clouds of rain, causing the greatest inconvenience and discomfort. At four o'clock everyone was astir, and the relieving force went forth in the following formation:—Two Egyptian regiments, in quarter distance column, with guns and mitrailleuses; behind them were negroes, battalions from Massowah and Soudini, then Turkish infantry with negroes, Turkish cavalry being in the rear with the transport train; skirmishers were thrown out in front, and on the flanks were the Egyptian cavalry. They had marched about six miles to Tokar when some firing from the skirmishers announced the presence of the enemy, the troops were halted, and the scouts reported that the rebels were encamped in a clump of bushes to the left front. A few rounds were fired from the Krupp cannon, but the enemy were silent. They were then observed trying to turn the right flank. Whereupon Baker Pasha sent out the Turkish cavalry

to charge them with the sabre, and a manœuvre occurring on the left front, Colonel Sartorius was ordered to form square with the infantry to repulse the attack, placing the camels in the centre. Two companies of the Alexandria battalion refused to obey orders. This was the state of things when the enemy, numbers of whom, in spite of the vigilance of the cavalry vedettes and scouts, had concealed themselves in the brushwood, rushed down with loud yells, delivering their chief attack upon the left side of the square and the left portion of the left front. The frantic efforts of the Egyptians to get into proper formation, the confused din of orders, and the chaos in the rear, defies description. As a matter of fact, says one correspondent, what should have been the rear side was an irregular out-bulging mass of horses, mules, camels, and men tightly wedged together, and extending towards the centre of the square. The Soudan blacks, who composed both the left side of the square and a portion of the front, stood well for a short time, but were soon demoralised by the inrush of fellow soldiers and the camel men behind.

About this time a sudden commotion arose in the midst of the cavalry skirmishers on the left flank. The enemy must for some time have been lying concealed close to them, for they now sprang to their feet and with wild cries charged the Egyptian horsemen. These were the first to run, joining the body of Egyptian cavalry, who were seized with panic also, rushed away screaming, wild with terror, and retreating pell-mell into the square; the men forming the square became panic-stricken also, fired anywhere and everywhere, shooting their own comrades in some instances.

Onward the enemy came into the square in pursuit of the craven cavalry. The miserable Egyptian soldiers refused even to defend themselves, but throwing away their rifles, flung themselves upon the ground, and grovelled there, screaming for mercy. No mercy was given, the Arab spearmen pouncing upon them and driving their

spears through their necks and bodies; in some instances the Egyptians were seized by the neck, while they were speared through the body and their throats were then slashed and hacked. The yells of the Arabs and the cries of their Egyptian victims were appalling.

Describing the awful scenes one of the newspaper correspondents wrote:—

“The right side of the square was not at first assailed, but kept up a continuous fire towards their front, which killed many of our cavalry. The Turks lost several men by their fire.

“When the charge had been made by the enemy on the left flank, General Baker with his staff were out with the cavalry in front. Upon riding back they found that the enemy had already got between them and the column. They at once charged them and cut their way through, but not without several being killed, amongst them Abdul Rusac, the chief Egyptian staff officer. His horse was hamstrung, and as it fell he was instantly speared by the Arabs. On nearing the square the General had to run the gauntlet of the fire of the Egyptians in front, who, regardless of what was going on around them, were blazing away in their front. When the General reached the square the enemy had already broken it up, and it was clear that all was lost.

“General Sartorius with his staff had been in the inside of the square when the enemy burst into it. They in vain tried to rally the panic-stricken Egyptians, and were so closely cooped in by the huddled mass of soldiers that, for a time, they were unable to extricate themselves. When, at last, the Arab spearmen had thinned the throng of Egyptians, they succeeded in breaking out and in cutting their way through the enemy.

“The shattered column streamed across the plain towards Trinkitat, preceded by the flying cavalry, the enemy pressing hotly on the rear of the infantry, and slaughtering at will. All mounted men unable to ride

well were dismounted by the rush of the flying horsemen, and killed. When last seen Dr. Leslie, Morice Bey, and Captain Walker, with drawn swords and pistols, were standing in a group surrounded by the enemy, close to the guns, in the front face of the square. There also the Turkish battalion and 36 Italian policemen were annihilated, scarce one escaping.

“So for five miles the flight and pursuit were kept up. The Massowah black battalion behaved well, and for a portion of the distance retired steadily, firing volleys into the enemy. Zebehr's blacks were undrilled and hardly able to fire their rifles, not having arrived long enough before the advance to enable the officers to get them into any shape. They therefore bolted as promptly as did the Egyptians. When the earthwork was reached, where the encampment was of the night before, the General made great efforts to protect the rear of the flying fugitives by a charge of the Turkish cavalry, with a few Egyptian horsemen whose flight had been stopped by the officers, but nothing could induce them to charge. Half a regiment of Indian cavalry would have swept the plain of the scattered enemy with the greatest ease. However, although the General could not induce the Turks to charge, he got them to form in line at the earthwork, and to halt facing the enemy. The pursuit then ceased, the enemy doubtless being afraid of the fire of the ships, but in fact no gun boat was in the harbour, the Admiral having ordered away the *Decoy* on the previous day.

“When the pursuit ceased, the weary fugitives, horse and foot, with many riderless horses here and there among them, made their way across the two intervening miles of deep mud to Trinkitat. On reaching the shore they would have crowded into the few boats there and swamped them had not the English officers, revolver in hand, kept them back. Then they stood huddled together on the beach like a flock of sheep, and had the enemy come on the whole would have been butchered as easily

and with as little resistance as so many sheep might have been. Gradually, as it was found that the enemy had really ceased in their pursuit, the panic subsided. All night long the work of embarkation continued. The General, the European officers, and the crews of the English ships working unceasingly in getting on board the men, horses, and baggage. Not one Egyptian officer lent his aid to keep order or to help in the work of embarkation.

"By morning all were on board, and we were then able to see what the loss really was. Of the English officers Morice Bey, Dr. Leslie, Captains Forrester Walter, Carrol, Smith, and Watkins, the last-named having only joined the day before, were missing, also some 10 other foreign officers. Colonel Hay, Majors Harvey and Giles, with Bewley and Burnaby, were safe. Melton Prior, the special artist, was, fortunately, owing to an accident, in hospital, and did not accompany the force. The four guns and the two Gatlings were lost, and so sudden and rapid was the enemy's onset that the guns and Gatlings could fire but one round; the Egyptian gunners then bolting instantly. The whole of the baggage was lost. The number of those who have escaped was officially estimated 1,500.

"The loss of the enemy must have been very small in comparison. A good many fell before the revolvers and swords of the European officers, and the Turkish battalion and Italians made a stout fight, and killed a good many of their assailants before they were overpowered. Still, the total must be small indeed in comparison with the loss we have suffered. Many very gallant actions were done by the European officers, who were all engaged in hand-to-hand struggles with the enemy's spearmen. Major Harvey saved his European servant when exhausted in the flight by placing him on his horse and running himself on foot beside it.

"The enemy betrayed the most profound contempt for

our troops, and clearly regarded themselves as invincible. One man would fall upon a score of Egyptian infantry, and a mounted Arab rode single-handed at a troop of our cavalry. He slashed on the back and severely wounded the Egyptian commander, who was too frightened even to attempt to defend himself; but was at last shot by an English officer. They had not 3,000 men in the field, but it must be owned that these came on with all the pluck and gallantry of the Moslems of old.

"Neither Baker Pasha nor his officers are to be blamed; they made immense exertions to get the force into a condition to fight, and they themselves fought with splendid courage."

Thus, in eight minutes from the beginning of the Arab rush, the whole force had taken to hopeless flight. Of the Soudan regiment of 400 from Saahett, on the Abyssinian frontier, only 70 returned, only 30 survived of the Turkish battalion, and nearly all in the European company of 36 were destroyed.

CHAPTER IX.

BRITISH PREPARATIONS FOR WAR—CONCENTRATION OF TROOPS—REBELS AROUND SUAKIM—PROJECTED RELIEF OF TOKAR—THE BRITISH COMMANDER—STATE OF THE COUNTRY—THE REBELS STILL FEARLESS—REPORTS BY SPIES—FALL OF SINKAT—AWFUL SCENES—TERRIBLE MASSACRE—TEWFIK'S BRAVERY—ALARMING INTELLIGENCE—SURRENDER OF TOKAR—SUSPECTED TREACHERY—LANDING OF THE BRITISH.

A PAINFUL impression was created by the dreadful massacre of the major portion of Baker's force, and the proved utter worthlessness of the Egyptian troops. The British Government could not disguise from themselves the fact that if the way to India by the Suez Canal and the Red Sea was to be saved, the hour for decisive action had indubitably arrived. Whatever their feelings, and however hateful armed intervention, there was no escape for them. Even if India had not weighed at the moment, they could not hide the glaring truth that providing Egypt was to be protected from the religio-fanatics, and from anarchy at the doors of her capital and of Alexandria, and from consequent ruin as regarded the great speculation by the Earl of Beaconsfield in the Suez Canal shares, and England's stake in the finances of the country, the British Ministry could not hesitate for one day. Everything now depended on promptitude, on the

1884.

starting of a second military campaign, and on the entire dispersal of Osman Digna's followers from the Red Sea coast. At all hazards this must be accomplished—however serious complications with France, still jealously watching English influence in Egypt, and with the other European Powers might become.

Accordingly, Sir William Hewett, then in command of the British naval force at Suakim, prepared to land sailors and marines to man the defences. The *Orontes*, with 1,000 sailors and marines on their way home from China, was, by orders of the Government, to stop at Suez; but having passed, she was brought to at Port Said on the 6th February. Instructions were sent out to Malta to have reinforcements for Suakim in readiness; the *Carysfort*, then at Alexandria, began to take in arms and ammunition, her destination being Port Said, where she was to take men from the *Orontes* and go thence to Suakim, it being understood that Admiral Hewett wanted the force at Suakim augmented to 500 marines, and that he would keep 500 black troops and 100 Turkish cavalry, after disposing of the Egyptians, whither the Government wanted them—so long as they were away from the theatre of hostilities. On the 8th February, H.M.S. *Monarch* and *Hecla* left Malta with 300 marines for Port Said, and on the 9th Admiral Hewett was invested with full powers at Suakim pending the arrival of the reinforcements, being told, at the same time, to warn the Arabs that any attack would be repulsed by British troops.

Intelligence came that on the 10th 3,000 rebels were round Suakim, from 3,000 to 4,000 near Tokar, and a like number at Sinkat. At the instigation of the Government, Admiral Hewett replied as to the force he thought necessary for the relief of these places, and in the meantime steps were taken that the *Jumna* troopship, en route from Bombay, should call at Aden that she might embark troops if essential. To the general officer commanding at Cairo instructions were telegraphed from the

1884

War Office that a force was to be collected at Suakim with the object of relieving Tokar, if it could hold out ; if not, of taking any measures necessary for the defence of the ports.

General Graham was appointed to command the forces, Sir Redvers Buller was selected to have charge of the infantry brigade, and to be second in command, while Colonel Herbert Stewart was to command all the mounted troops, with Colonel Wanchope as Deputy-Assistant General. Three battalions were selected for service from the troops in Egypt, the Second Fusiliers, then in the *Jumna*, also a battalion of Marines. The 19th Hussars, the 19th Infantry, with horsemen from India, were selected to serve under Stewart, and in addition artillery were ordered, and camels were decided on to a large extent for transport purposes. Three months supply of grocery for 6,000 men were ordered, also 180,000 tins of preserved meat, and 400 tons of forage for the horses were ordered, 250 rounds of ammunition per man being likewise provided.

While the preliminaries to the landing of a force of 6,000 British and Indian troops are proceeding at Suakim, we must return for a moment to the events immediately following on the defeat of Baker Pasha near that town, in order to refer to them in detail. As may be easily imagined, the victory of Osman had a tremendous effect in his favour among the tribes, all of whom on the line from Kassala to Massowah became disaffected, while the Arabs in the bazaars in Suakim even moved about sullen and gloomy, the belief in the Mahdi everywhere gaining ground. All sorts of reports gained credence, and nothing was too extravagant to be accepted. One rumour actually found acceptance in Suakim among the natives that the English purposely led the Egyptian troops to destruction, having before sent word to Osman Digna of their exact route and plans, and given him instructions as to the manner in which he should fall upon them !

This was done, the rumour said, that the black troops might be destroyed, as the English wanted the country for themselves !

A spy returned from the rebel camp. There they had stripped him and threatened him with death if he would not become a Moslem instantly. He described the Hadendowa as more like fiends than men. They showed him the hand of a dead man, and wanted to know whether it was the hand of an Englishman or a Turk, stating that the dead gentleman had many guineas in his pocket. The Mahdi, the true prophet, had, they said, written to them of his successes over Hicks and others, telling them to rise and join him. This they would do, and feared no guns. If they died, the Mahdi promised them Paradise; if they refused to join him they would kill them all, and they would then go straight to hell. The Mahdi would come through Egypt, kill all the Egyptians, Turks, and Christians, would overthrow the world, and put it right. Other portions of his force would cross to Hedjaz and Mecca, would kill the Sultan of Turkey and take India—in fact, all the world. Daily, Osman assembled his followers, and read letters received from the Mahdi, exciting the hearers to the wildest frenzy.

Another spy, who had succeeded in breaking through the lines of the Sinkat besieging force, brought word that the town was *in extremis*, and that Tewfik begged aid might be sent without delay. He had tried to negotiate with the Mahdi, and had failed; and if the Anglo-Egyptian army were unable to assist him, he would be glad if they would endeavour to treat with the insurgents, although he had little belief in such a move. The enemy's camp was placed at a distance of about 12 miles from Sinkat, and Tewfik estimated their number at from 5,000 to 6,000, but they were continually on the move, some starting out for fresh points, others arriving in their place. The Governor had received six letters from the rebel camp, demanding the surrender of the town, all

breathing the spirit of fierce religious fanaticism, but Tewfik said, he was determined to hold out as long as there was any hope of relief, or until starvation and sickness rendered his men powerless. When this message was received the Egyptians at Suakim were altogether powerless to help, the town being surrounded by the enemy, there being also a spirit of mutiny in the camp.

Just when the British troops were converging at Suakim for the relief of Tokar the sickening intelligence came that the garrison of Sinkat had been overwhelmed by the rebels, and that Tewfik, his soldiers, and the women and children had been foully murdered. This was on the 13th February. The garrison sallied out under the Governor for a distance of two miles, Tewfik pointing out to his men that by fighting they might save themselves, whereas by remaining all must in a few days die of hunger, while flight was impossible. The brave Governor had, before starting, ordered that all the stores be burned, he had spiked the guns and blown up the magazine. Then each man having filled his pouches with as much ammunition as he could carry, the gallant 600 men of the garrison went to fight for life or death. They had, with the people in the town, been living for weeks on half-rations, and for a fortnight they had subsisted on roots and leaves, and, desperate from the pangs of hunger, and cut off, as they believed, from all human aid, and having scorned the offer of surrender to rebels, they were marching, endowed by the splendid spirit of Tewfik, when the old, old tactics of the opposing Mahdists were once again brought into play. The Egyptians had entered a narrow gorge, strewn with large boulders, when the enemy came from places of concealment and fell upon them, the Ambahs on the right and the Bishereen Arabs on the left, with the full force of a terrible fury. The poor fellows, reduced as they were by hunger and sickness, fought like lions, and for a time repulsed the onslaught of the inrushing foe. For a time only; numbers at last prevailed, the

ranks of those who were splendid examples to their country, and who bore a striking contrast to Baker Pasha's shrinking wretches, were broken, and a general massacre then took place, not a single man escaping. The women and a few men who were left behind were soon enveloped in the awful avalanche, not more than 30 women, four men, and the Cadi of Sinkat remaining to tell the dreadful story.

But the cup of bitterness was not yet full—a cruel Fate was not yet propitiated.

Ten days subsequent to the morning on which the Sinkat garrison died fighting heroically the objective of the British relieving force was removed by weakness and vacillation, if not by the black crime of treachery. The rebels had kept up a fire from Krupp guns and from many rifles on Tokar for several days, but few of the soldiers were killed or wounded. At last, the Governor yielded to importunities, threw up the sponge, and sent emissaries to confer with the rebels and to make terms for surrender. What transpired with Osman Digna's lieutenants has never been properly known, but it is certain that on the return of the delegates they announced that the soldiers must give up their arms. There was, naturally, great commotion, many refusing to abandon all hope of future resistance. Finally terms were arranged, and the triumph of the rebels was complete. Such was the first report of the ignominious surrender. Later details gave the circumstances attending the surrender a more marked air of suspicion. These details showed that a merchant of Tokar, who had been imprisoned by the authorities, was released, and went to the rebel camp. He was well received there, returned, and made overtures to the garrison, bringing an invitation to the officers to feast with the rebels next day. A number of officers thereupon went out to the besiegers, became excellent friends with them, received many presents, and returned from the camp accompanied by 100 of the rebels, thus showing that the

surrender was quite decided upon. One officer only, it was said, wanted to fight, and tried to gather the soldiers round him, but was overruled by his seniors, who, mostly former adherents of Arabi, preferred ceding the town to Moslem rebels to being succoured by Christians. During the night the soldiers who were still staunch escaped, journeying by night and hiding by daytime, without water, and finally arrived at Suakim. The town was duly surrendered, albeit there was no valid reason for it, there being an abundance of provisions, with 45,000 rounds of rifle ammunition. The artillery ammunition was short, only 22 rounds per gun. The garrison numbered 300.

The authorities knew that the English were coming; they had answered two letters and heard the firing from a British man-of-war.

For the moment, the question arose whether the surrender of the Tokar garrison would not stay the landing of the British and the renewal of hostilities. It was soon dispelled, however. Osman Digna had become far too dangerous, and he clearly meant fighting. Had he not done so it was imperative to scatter his hordes, for neither town, city, nor country was safe while his attitude was increasingly threatening by constant reinforcements, the product of repeated victories.

The landing of the British was continued, therefore; preparations were sustained, and not a second was lost in massing Sir Gerald Graham's little army. From Suakim, the base of operations was removed to Trinkitat, a little further south, and more convenient for the purposes of assembling a military force. This included 330 men of the 10th Hussars; of the 19th Hussars, 410 men; mounted infantry, 126; Royal Artillery, 126; six 7-pounder guns, 10 brass mountain guns, and four Krupp 9-centimetre guns; Naval Brigade, 62 sailors, two 9-pounder guns, three Gatlings, three Gardners; and of infantry: 1st brigade, 3rd battalion, King's Royal Rifles, 610 men; 1st battalion Gordon Highlanders, 751 men; 2nd battalion

Royal Irish Fusiliers, 334 men ; 2nd brigade, 1st battalion Black Watch, 761 men ; 361 Royal Marines ; 100 men, Royal Engineers ; and detachments of 200 men, besides which the York and Lancaster regiment was told off for service. Exclusive of transport, the Expedition was constituted of 206 officers, 4,400 men, 22 guns, and six machine guns. For transport there were 600 camels, with 350 mules, and 100 camels for ambulance work. There was a camel battery of about 80 animals and 100 men.

Osman Digna was quite conversant with the landing of the British and with their object, but he was still insolently defiant, and placed his force of 10,000 men at El Teb, a few miles from Trinkitat, and in the vicinity of the scene of Baker Pasha's defeat on the 6th of the preceding month, February, there to await our men.

CHAPTER X.

EL TEB—NIGHT BEFORE THE BATTLE—FORMATION OF THE
BRITISH—SICKENING SCENES—DESCRIPTION OF THE
CONFLICT: DESPERATE RESISTANCE OF THE ARABS—
PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS—EXCITING EVENTS—BAR-
BARITY OF THE ENEMY—BRITISH PLUCK—THE ENEMY
ROUTED—EVIDENCE OF ARAB PRISONERS—LOSSES ON
BOTH SIDES.

“THE Expedition encamped, on Thursday night, the 28th February, near Fort Baker. The men were all on the ground before sundown, except the 65th, who did not arrive till eight o’clock. By that time all was quietly settled, fires had been kindled and coffee made. In the morning the forward march was resumed. The force was formed in an oblong, the front and rear being longer than the sides, owing to the strength of the regiments. The Gordon Highlanders in line formed the advance with two Gatlings and a Gardner in the right corner, and two Gardners and a Gatling in the left corner. On the right side was the 89th in line, in the rear the Black Watch. Our total strength was below 4,000 including 150 sailors under Captain Rolfe, of the *Euryalus*. We moved forward about half-a-mile and then halted to get the men finally in thorough order; our front was about 350 yards long. A squadron of the 10th Hussars under Major Gough went forward as scouts, and they covered our front and flanks,

advancing in a semi-circle 1,000 yards ahead. When we got a mile from Fort Baker, on the road to Teb, which we approached by keeping well to the north, crossing low sand-knolls thick with scrub, the enemy opened fire with Remingtons. The range was too far, and no damage was done. We could see a few hundreds swarming about the high ground on our front and flanks. They retired very slowly before us, keeping within 1,200 yards. The main body of our cavalry kept following in our left rear 900 yards off. Colonel Herbert Stewart had formed them in three lines, Colonel Wood, with the 10th Hussars, leading, then Lieutenant-Colonel Barrow with the 19th Hussars, and Colonel Webster, the 19th Hussars having English horses. All the others had Egyptian mounts. About 9.30, H.M.S. *Sphinx* fired four rounds from Trinkitat, but the range was too great, her shells bursting fully a mile short of the enemy's position, and they were signalled to cease firing, as the shells were getting dangerously near our cavalry. The mounted infantry were now sent forward on our left under Captain Humphreys, to touch the enemy, who appeared obstinate about moving, although not disinclined to fight. The infantry force tramped steadily onward, halting but two or three times to rest, the blue jackets and artillery drawing the guns. The square was well kept all along. Where the ground was a little more difficult than common the men marched by fours-right and column of companies. That was seldom as, thanks to General Baker and Colonel Burnaby of the Intelligence Department, who were in the square with General Graham, our route was so selected as to avoid, as far as possible, the broken and shrub-covered ground. The way the infantry went lay along the lower and more barren sandy soil, and at this time I was with the scouts, and passed directly along the track taken by the unfortunate fugitives from the disaster which befell Baker Pasha's forces.

"The bodies studded the route to Teb, lying about in

hundreds, polluting the air. Swarms of lazy carrion birds flew off on our approach. By 10.30 we had marched three miles from Fort Baker, and here we could plainly see that they had built some sort of earthworks, in which they had mounted guns and set up standards.

“The enemy’s fire had almost ceased, only a few shots were popping off on our extreme right and left, and these were aimed at the scouts. It was a fine sight to see our fellows step out as if on holiday parade. It gave a grand idea of the power and pride of physical strength. The bagpipes played gaily, and the Highlanders, instinctively cocking their caps and swinging their shoulders, footed the way cheerily. In this manner we marched to within 800 yards of the enemy’s first position. An old sugar mill had once stood in the vicinity; a sun-dried brick building and a large three-flued boiler marked the place. There were also a number of native huts. We could see what appeared to be a fort, with two guns. Here a halt was called. Meanwhile the mounted infantry and the scouts had gone back to where the cavalry were, 900 yards off. The scouts, however, had done their work, and had run the enemy to earth; many of the infantry sat down quite indifferent about the rebels’ presence, but others showed more interest, watching the black faces that gleamed at us from behind every knoll of sand or vantage-point. Neither force seemed disposed to open fire. It was ‘Sir Richard Strachan and the Earl of Chatham’ over again.”

Thus wrote the special correspondent of the *Telegraph* in the course of his description of the events immediately preceding the battle. Of the actual fight the *Standard’s* special telegraphed:—“At a few minutes before 11 the scouts move away from our front, and leave us face to face with the enemy, who are now but a few hundred yards away. We can see their black heads popping up from their hiding-places behind scrub and earthwork to look at us, but they make no movement of attack. Our line of

march is not directly towards them, but across their front, and by 11 o'clock we are moving past their position at a distance of less than 400 yards. The moment is an intensely exciting one; at every instant we expect to see the dark horde spring to their feet and charge down upon us. Suddenly the silence is broken by a hot fire of musketry, which spurts out from bush and earthworks, and the Krupp guns are also brought to play upon us. Several men in the square at once fall out from the ranks wounded, but the vast majority of the bullets whistle harmlessly overhead. An order is given, and the square inclines its course rather more to the right, thus taking us somewhat further from the face of the enemy's position, but still passing on so as to reach a point at which we shall command the enemy's rear. As we march we are pelted with a storm of bullets, while the shrapnel shell from the Krupp guns burst overhead with great accuracy, showing that the Tokar gunners know their business well. A bullet from one of these shells strikes down General Baker. He is badly wounded on the left cheek, but is soon again in the saddle, with his face bound up, ready for any service he may be called upon to perform. It is a hot time for all of us.

"Presently the square halts, and the men lie down in their ranks. The enemy are at this moment about 300 yards away, on our left and left rear. It is now the turn of the machine guns and the 7-pounders of the camel battery, and they open fire upon the enemy. I am near the hospital in the centre of the square, and the demands for stretchers come in very rapidly, showing that the shots are still dropping thick about us. Presently a shell bursts among the hospital mules, killing one, but, fortunately, doing no other damage, while overhead the rifle bullets are ringing past in a perfect hail. Six guns are at this time firing at us.

"At a little before noon our guns appear to get the mastery over those of the enemy. His fire slackens

and gradually dies out. The constant movement of the black heads among the bushes shows, however, that the position is still strongly held. The troops now begin to show signs of impatience. 'If they won't attack us, why don't we attack them?' is the cry. A consultation is held between Generals Graham and Buller, and the order is given for a move. The men spring to their feet cheering, the bagpipes strike up again, and we march straight at the enemy's position. It is not a charge but a steady, solid movement, the formation of which had all along been observed. It looks, however, all the more formidable, for enthusiasm and discipline are equally marked, as the whole of the troops are cheering while the square sweeps down towards the enemy.

"The Arabs cease firing as we approach. They put aside their rifles and grasp their spears. Still they lie quiet until we are within a few yards of their wall, then they rush out and fling themselves straight at our bayonets. They deter the charge almost simultaneously on two sides of the square, and as from the change of direction the flank of the square is now its front, the brunt of the onset falls on the Black Watch, the 65th, and the Naval Brigade. The enemy do not come on in masses, but in groups of thirties and twenties, sometimes of threes and twos, sometimes alone. They dashed forward against our ranks with poised spear, but not a man reaches the line of bayonets, for one and all are swept away before the terrible fire of musketry which breaks out as they rush forward. For a moment, on the other side of the square, the matter seems to be in doubt. So hotly do the Arabs press forward that the troops pause in their steady advance. It becomes a hand-to-hand fight, the soldiers meeting the Arab spear with cold steel, their favourite weapon, and beating them at it. There is not much shouting, and only a short, sharp exclamation, a brief shout, or an oath as the soldiers engage with their foes. At this critical moment, for the enemy are rushing

up thickly, the Gardner guns open fire, and their leaden hail soon decides matters. At this instant Admiral Hewett, who, with Mr. Levison, his private secretary, is present as a spectator, joins the Naval Brigade and leads them on over the dead bodies of the Arabs, lying thickly strewn in their front, into the work, which proves to be but a bank of sand. Colonel Burnaby here has his horse shot under him, and a bullet passes through his arm. Still with the double-barrelled fowling-piece he carries he knocks over the Arabs who assail him. But they press on, and he is only saved from being speared by one of the Gordon Highlanders bayonetting an Arab who attacks him when both barrels of his gun are empty.

“Several fierce personal encounters take place as the troops rush into the entrenchments. The first feeling of nervousness has passed away, their blood is up now, and the enthusiasm of battle is on them. More and more shrill the pipes skirl out, and the men are eager to close with the foe. As single Arabs rush down the brave soldiers step singly forward from the ranks and meet, the bayonet to spear, in almost every instance vanquishing them by the bayonet alone, without firing. A soldier, who had single-handed engaged two of the enemy, would have got the worst of it had not Captain Wilson, of the *Hecla*, come to his aid and run one of his assailants through the body, breaking his own sword and receiving a wound across the face as he did so. Sharp as the fight is, it lasts but a minute or two after the troops have passed over the sand bank. The work contains one Krupp gun, which, of course, falls into our hands.

“A halt is now called, and an endeavour made to re-form the square again. This has been somewhat broken in the fight, the sides composed of the Irish Fusiliers and the Rifles being now open, as the troops there had moved forward so as to prolong the fighting line. The enemy have as yet no idea that they are beaten; they have lost one position, but are still full of fight. We are now right

in rear of their main position, around the wells of Teb. They fall to work and move round two of the Krupp guns from its front face, and open a hot fire with these as well as with their musketry, and we reply with the captured Krupp gun and with the Gardners. The bush grows thickly all about where we are now formed up, and numbers of the enemy are lying concealed in it. These constantly leap to their feet and rush at us, singly or by twos and threes, with fanatical valour, often coming on till they fall dead almost at the muzzles of the rifles. During this halt the cavalry have moved round behind us, and we can now see them advancing towards a large mass of the enemy, who are making off in the distance. They are manifestly quickening their pace. Faster and faster they go; their sabres are flashing in the sunlight, and they dash into the mass of the enemy. Right through them they cut their way, and then turn sharp back again. The Arabs do not fly, but stand and fight stubbornly and gallantly, displaying as much courage as against the infantry. Again and again they are dispersed, but each time they gather together as the horsemen come on; and the cavalry, although cutting down many, go by no means scatheless through them. Major Slade, of the 10th Hussars, Lieutenant Probyn, of the 9th Bengal Cavalry; and Lieutenant-Colonel Barrow and Lieutenant Freeman, of the 19th Hussars, were all speared, and upwards of 20 of their men.

“It is one o’clock now. The duel between our artillery and that of the enemy ceases; and, as the enemy will not attack us, we move down against the position in the same order as before. We are met with a hot fire, and very frequent charges of parties of Arabs, who come on against our terrible fire just as the Afghan Ghazies did; but one by one, as they near our line, they meet a bullet, throw up their arms, and pitch headlong forward to the ground. The position against which we are now moving consists of trenches and innumerable little rifle pits, each con-

taining two, three, or four men. As we advance slowly forward the Arabs leap suddenly out of these little pits, like rabbits startled by beaters, but very few of them fly, the great majority preferring to meet death by charging down on our ranks. So confident are our men by this time, that the square formation is abandoned, and they advance to the attack in two long lines. Thus we make our way forward, clearing the ground of the enemy, until by two o'clock, after nearly three hours' incessant fighting, we have passed over the entire position occupied by the enemy. We entered it at the rear and emerged at the front. Every foot was contested by the enemy, who displayed a courage, a tenacity, and a contempt for death such as only steady troops could have withstood. There is no doubt that had General Graham's force consisted of Egyptian instead of British troops, the former disasters would have been repeated here."

Some time after the battle, remarked another correspondent, and when the troops were searching about the enclosure, a youth of some twelve years, unobserved among a crowd of dead and dying, started up, and rushed with a drawn knife on two of our men; who, taken aback, ran for some distance, and then turning round, shot him. At some distance outside an Arab sprang like a cat upon the back of one of our soldiers, and tried to cut his throat. An officer, rushing up, pistolled the Arab through the heart, barely in time to save the soldier's life.

General Buller recommended Captain Wilson, of the *Hecla*, for an action which he described as one of the most courageous he had ever witnessed. There was a gap in the square, and five or six of the enemy seeing it, rushed forward, attempting to pierce the ranks. Captain Wilson advanced to meet them alone, breaking his sword in an effort to cut one of them down; he would not retire a step, but held his ground, knocking his adversaries down with his fist. Either by a miracle or the surprising nature

of his attack, he escaped with a few wounds, and the square closing up, rescued him. Two sergeants and a trooper of the 19th Hussars saved Colonel Barrow with great courage, which might be inferred from the fact alone that no other officer or man, severely wounded, escaped to live. When Colonel Barrow was hurt, Sergeant Marshall caught him as he fell from his horse, and, seizing a loose one, tried to place his Colonel upon it. Then came up Trooper Boseley, to whom belonged the loose horse, which had fallen. Boseley, on foot, under a heavy fire, through masses of the enemy, supported the wounded officer into the infantry lines, supported by Sergeant Fenton; Sergeant Marshall, knowing that his troop would be feeling the loss of officers, rejoined it. A corporal of the 19th Hussars had four horses killed under him, three by rifle bullets and one by spears. Sergeant James Fatt, of the 19th Hussars, being ordered to push forward on scouting duty, and finding himself close to Tokar and alone, entered the town, not knowing whether it was friendly or hostile. He was the first man in Tokar. The 10th Hussars recorded equally bold actions.

So much for personal prowess.

The prisoners were interrogated after the battle, one of whom confirmed the story brought into Trinkitat and Suakim about the negotiations between the rebels and the Tokar garrison, but did not say that the whole had gone over to the Mahdi's party. He said that the Sheikh Kadra, commanding the rebels near Tokar, had sent to Osman Digna for reinforcements against Baker; that Osman was only able to send a thousand, of whom the narrator was one. He said they had no quarrel against the British. Asked what the original grounds of the rebellion were, several prisoners replied the injustice, indifference, and often cruelty of the Egyptian Government, with which they would for ever refuse to come to terms, and of which they spoke in words of indignation and

contempt. Osman Digna, said they, would never submit, adding that the Mahdi was invincible.

In this battle at El Teb, 4 British officers and 31 men were killed, and 155 men wounded ; the loss of the rebels amounting to nearly 5,000 men *hors de combat* (2,000 being slain). Osman Digna was not present.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ARABS AGAIN COLLECTING—BRITISH ADVANCE ON TOKAR—VIEW OF THE ENEMY—DUBBAH OCCUPIED—TROPHIES OF WAR DISCOVERED—ARABS COMING IN—PROCLAMATION BY GENERAL GRAHAM AND ADMIRAL HEWETT—ADDRESS TO THE TROOPS—RETURN TO TRINKITAT—PREPARATIONS FOR ANOTHER BATTLE—THE REBELS SIGHTED—CONSTITUTION OF THE BRITISH FORCE—BATTLE OF TAMASI—FEARFUL ONSLAUGHT OF THE REBELS—THE BRITISH WAVERING—GREAT SLAUGHTER—LOST GROUND RECOVERED—DEFEAT OF OSMAN—HIS CAMP FIRED—THE KILLED AND WOUNDED—THE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE RECALLED.

ALTHOUGH the rebel force of 10,000 men had been soundly thrashed at El Teb, it was at once apparent that the British had yet to launch the *coup de grace*. Another body of at least 5,000 Arabs was waiting for them at Tamasi, sometimes described as Tamanieb, in the vicinity of Tokar.

1684 On the morning of the 1st March, then, the victorious troops left the scene of the previous day's action, scouts being thrown out well in advance and upon each flank to make virgorous search for the enemy, whose *penchant* for lying in ambush had, by this time, become proverbial. None were found, however. Eventually, as Tokar was

approached, the natives were seen running in numbers from the town into the bush, and early in the afternoon fire was opened on our scouts. At three o'clock the infantry came up, and forming into square, deflected in its march out of the direct line for Tokar, in order to make the advance on more open ground, which was studded with higher and denser bush. As the square advanced the cavalry wheeled round from the right, near to the right-front, until it encircled the west side of the town. Evidently the enemy had retired, many fugitives from El Teb fleeing at the coming of the British also. A quiet night was passed, and next morning a number of cavalry entered a straggling village called Dubbah, where, in some large huts, were stacked rifles, the Gatlings lost by Baker Pasha, and a mountain gun. In every hut around were lying more rifles, heaps of bayonets, cartridges, port-manteaus, saddlery, clothes, stationery, material and remnants of all kinds—all taken from the equipment of Baker Pasha's army. Clothes were there pierced with spears, papers, medical instruments, band instruments, and all manner of articles useless to the rebels. Here and there were recently-dug holes, where money had been hidden, likewise provisions in plenty. The number of rifles exceeded 1,500.

Tokar reached, appearances went to prove that no serious attempt had been made by the rebels on the town. In the place only seventy soldiers were found, but next day many families came in. An artilleryman stated that he and seven others had been dragged with ropes to El Teb to man the guns. All his comrades were killed, and he, on attempting to escape was shot in the back. According to his story Osman Digna deceived the rebels, telling them the English were not coming, that they had only to meet and defeat another Egyptian army.

In a proclamation to the tribes Admiral Hewett and General Graham invited all the sheikhs to come in and meet them at Suakim. They had been warned already,

the Arabs were told, that the English force had come there, not only to relieve the garrison of Tokar, but to redress the wrongs under which they had so long suffered ; nevertheless they had gone on "trusting that notorious scoundrel Osman Digna, well known to them all as a bad man, his former life in Suakim having proved that to be the case. He had led them away," continued the proclamation, "with the foolish idea that the Mahdi had come upon earth. The great God who rules the earth did not send such scoundrels as Osman Digna from their country." The Arabs were promised protection and pardon if they came in at once ; otherwise the fate of those who fell at El Teb would surely overtake them.

About the same time General Graham issued an address to the troops in which he said the objects of the expedition had been achieved, Tokar had been relieved, and the rebels so thoroughly humbled that the force before Tokar might safely retire. He recorded his sense of the gallantry and discipline shown by all arms. He said he was proud to command them, that they deserved well of their country.

Six tribes who had hitherto been wavering sent in their submission in reply to the joint proclamation of Admiral Hewett and General Graham. Their sheikhs did not, however, come in, excusing themselves on the ground that they were small tribes, and that if Osman Digna were aware that they were communicating with the British he might send out and eat them up ! Twenty-one hostile sheikhs refused the offer of peace in a long and rambling document filled with quotations from the Koran. They said that between them and the Turks, whom the English assisted, there was nothing but the sword. All those who did not believe in the Madhi were doomed to destruction. A number of the messengers who took out the proclamation were arrested by a party of the enemy and taken before Osman. He read all the letters they carried, and tore them up at once, telling the messengers

they were worse than Christians, and that it would be right to slay them. They were then taken as prisoners.

To return to the expedition. Finding the rebels had scampered off, and that Tokar was free, Sir Gerald Graham conducted his army back to Trinkitat. But for a very few days only. Osman Digna's camp was to be attacked, and on Tuesday, March 11th, the journey to the head-quarters of the rebel chief, at Tamasi, outside Suakim, was commenced. Scouts were pushed forward as usual to provide against surprises, and on the way to what was known as Baker's zareba shots were exchanged with the enemy, who were determined to make another stand. Ridges were occupied by the British, positions strengthened, and preliminaries to another pitched battle completed. Throughout the night of Wednesday, the 12th March, the enemy were very bold, reconnoitring in force, firing, and otherwise annoying those of our men who were not engaged on active duty. At sunrise, on the 13th, the day of Tamasi, it was ascertained that the rebels were some 5,000 strong; and parties appearing at 1,000 or 1,200 yards away from where a Gardner and a 9-pounder had been located, they were quickly dispersed. Still pushing on over rough ground, a slight change was effected in the line of advance. The native auxiliaries were all sent to the rear of the cavalry with the exception of half-a-dozen, who, with Major Chermside, went to the front with instructions to tell all the Arabs that the English troops had no quarrel against them, and would not injure anyone until fired upon; whilst as to Osman Digna, if he would surrender and come in his life would be spared. Three of the natives were mounted, and they galloped about trying to communicate these tidings to their fellow Hadendowa tribesmen who had espoused the Mahdi's cause. They were invariably distanced by the enemy's scouts, and never had a chance even to shout their message of peace.

From among the hills where the British now were, the enemy could be seen in a strong position about two miles

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From among the hills where the British now were, the enemy could be seen in a strong position about two miles

distant. Heaps of stones, monuments, and graves, were observed on every side. Between one and two o'clock in the afternoon the mounted infantry were advanced up to within 600 or 700 yards of the enemy, who replied with telling effect, and an exchange of shots occurring, several of them were noticed to drop.

For the battle proper, which lasted for over three hours, the force advanced in *échelon* of brigades. "The second brigade was in front, the front line being formed by a half-battalion of the York and Lancaster Regiment and a half-battalion of the Black Watch, with the other half-battalion of each regiment in open column on the respective outer flanks, ready to wheel up into line. In rear, in a second line, close to the ranks of the front line, were the Royal Marines in line. A 9-pounder battery of four guns was in rear of the detachment of the York and Lancaster Regiment having the half-battalion of the regiment in column on its right flank. The Gatling battery was in the same position on the left flank of the front line, so that on the word "Halt!" by the outward wheel of the half-battalion on the flank, square would be instantly formed. The first brigade was in the same formation, with a half-battalion of the Gordon Highlanders and a half-battalion of the Royal Irish Fusiliers forming the front line, the remaining half-battalion of these regiments being in column in rear of the flanks. The camel battery was in rear of the centre of the front line. The morning was bright and clear, but with no breeze to carry away the smoke of the men's fire."

As the British approached the steep side of the valley they were met by numerous bodies of the enemy, who retreated to the edge of the incline, where they halted and waited the approach. In the meantime the cavalry, which had taken up a position on the left rear, sent forward two squadrons, together with the Abyssinians, to skirmish. They were quickly engaged, and a hot fire was soon raging.

As the first companies reached the edge of the incline just mentioned, the rebels suddenly appeared in great numbers, emerging from behind the rocks, and made a fierce charge upon the square. Not being able to see the enemy for the smoke, a species of momentary panic ensued, and the rebels, not being slow to profit by the confusion, they crawled on their hands and knees beneath the bayonets, and beneath the muzzles of the Gardners and Gatlings, and thus got into the square, when they commenced stabbing and slashing at our men, doing great execution among them, no power being able to keep them off, holding as they did by the men, and delivering thrusts with the spear ere bayonets could be recovered for use. The second brigade had the full brunt of this demoniacal onslaught, and the York and Lancaster Regiment fell back in confusion behind the Naval Brigade, thus cutting the latter off from their limbers and ammunition. The Navals stuck to their guns, however, losing three officers and eleven men in so doing, retiring only when they had no ammunition. The panic spread, and the second brigade actually retreated, the rebels following them closely, stabbing and hacking at the hindermost. Some moments elapsed before the retreat could be checked, and the restoration was, in a great measure, due to the gallant action of the cavalry.

When first the infantry were engaged, the cavalry withdrew to the rear, where they were hidden from the enemy by a fall in the ground. The panic occurring, the cavalry advanced at a trot, meaning to afford aid to the infantry by a charge. But this was unnecessary, for the enemy, seeing them advancing, hesitated, which gave time to the men to hear what their officers had to command, and to obey.

Not a moment too soon did the infantry re-form, for the rebels hesitated no longer, and, coming on again with redoubled fury, tried to create another panic. They were not successful—they were pushed back slowly but surely,

and the guns were recaptured. By this panic the 65th Regiment lost two officers and 20 men, and the Black Watch one officer and nearly 60 men—83 in all, the vast majority of whom were killed, their bodies having been shockingly mangled and hewn with sword cuts and spear wounds, while the Arabs lay dead in hundreds.

In the meantime, the first brigade, stationed about 500 yards in the rear and to the right of the brigade which had had to bear such a trying ordeal, and who had, eventually, come out of it with such pluck, had been hotly engaged, the right flank suffering most severely. The men behaved admirably, and so well directed was their fire, that no man could live within sixty yards of it. The mounted battery was brought into play, also, doing very material damage.

Not only did the second brigade recover the Gatling and Gardner guns, but with the first brigade, they were careful to chase the enemy past the scene of the momentary defeat, going forward to the ridge of a hill commanding the whole valley beneath, pouring out a murderous fire upon the rebels, who sought refuge in scampering off at headlong speed, and hiding behind bushes and rocks. The day had indeed been practically won by the British, though small groups fought with grand determination, their bodies rolling down rocks, being lost in the hidden depths. A few minutes' halt was then called, and the advance of the whole force being again ordered, a second ridge was gained amid cheers, and in the valley was seen the camp of Osman Digna. The few Arabs remaining beat a hasty retreat after the main body, which had dispersed in all directions, leaving everything inside and outside their mat huts in great disorder—bags of money, Korans, talismans, grain, and other property, which showed clearly that they had never contemplated the British would advance thus far. The standard of Osman was taken also, and the banner of the noble defender of Sinkat, Tewfik Bey, was recovered. The whole camp was fired, and rest

was gained for the remainder of the day upon the very ground which had been the rebel chief's head-quarters for a period sadly too prolonged.

The firing of the camp or village, with its stores and ammunition, afforded a wonderful spectacle. "At a short distance anyone would have thought that a fearful battle was raging, volley firing being perfectly represented by whole boxes of Remington cartridges exploding at one time, while every now and then the explosion of heavy shells added to the realism of the scene."

The work cut out for the expedition having been fully accomplished, the troops returned to Suakim and Trinkitat on the day after the battle and the burning of Osman's camp, though the field and surrounding country were not vacated until a certainty had been arrived at that no lurkers remained.

In a special order of the day General Graham said the second task of the expedition had been accomplished, the rebel army that threatened Suakim dispersed, and its leader, Osman Digna, was a fugitive on the hills with a price upon his head (a promised reward which was subsequently withdrawn on the instructions of the British Government on the plea that no good come of it). This result the officers and men had brought about by the discipline and steadiness which they had shown in the performance of the several duties assigned to them. The men, who had cheerfully worked on the wharf all night, who bore the thirst and heat of the march, who quietly endured the dropping fire of the enemy all the night before the battle, had, said General Graham, shown themselves to be the true stuff of which British soldiers were made. There was only one critical moment when discipline was forgotten, but he remembered how the men of the second brigade had rallied, and had stood shoulder to shoulder until the enemy could no longer face them. The thanks of the army were due to the first brigade for the steadiness with which it received and repulsed the attack,

while the naval brigade had shown determination, and the cavalry had co-operated well with the infantry as skirmishers and scouts, and, at the most critical moment, protected the flank of the second brigade. The commissariat and transport department had also been indefatigable, and had shown the admirable energy of organization; and the arrangements made by the army medical department for the comfort and transport of the wounded and sick had been all that could be desired. The staff, too, had evinced great zeal and efficiency.

The total loss on the side of the British was, it should be stated, five officers and 102 men killed, and eight officers and 108 men wounded, as against an estimated loss on the side of the rebels variously estimated at 1,000 to 4,000 killed and wounded.

Our losses had been in Egypt, from July, 1882, to March, 1884, including the naval and Indian contingents: Bombardment of Alexandria, 5 killed, 27 wounded; Kassassin, 16 killed, 162 wounded; El Teb, 35 killed, 155 wounded; Tamasi, 107 killed, 116 wounded; miscellaneous, 16 killed, 68 wounded; total, 255 killed, 915 wounded. In addition there died of their wounds 66; died, excluding only those killed in battle, 871; invalided home from other causes than wounds, 4,405.

Reports arriving from various quarters that Osman was collecting the remnants of his scattered force on the hills beyond Tamanieb—that, in fact, a thousand men and boys were not yet satisfied with the supply of British shot, shell, and cold steel, it was deemed expedient to go in search of the rebel leader and his following. Accordingly, a force of two brigades were formed again, the first under General Buller, composed of the Gordon Highlanders, the Royal Irish Fusiliers, and two companies of the King's Royal Rifles; and the second under General Davies, made up of the Black Watch, the Royal Marines, and a detachment of the York and Lancaster Regiment. There were four 9-pounders and two 7-pounders

of the camel battery between the two brigades, cavalry and mounted infantry leading and on the flanks for scouting purposes. Rebels were found here and there and as quickly dislodged, this occurring the greater portion of the way to the village of Tamanieb, consisting of some 300 huts, and formerly tenanted by the rebels. The wretched dwellings were burned, and no force worthy of the name being met with, and it being impossible to follow bands of rebels further in the wild and rugged country, the return towards Suakim was begun, and ended without incident. Reconnaissances took place at intervals, and a show was made of trotting out a few squadrons of cavalry on the Berber road, but steps were retraced without anything coming of the journey.

Much was made of this advance on the Berber road at the time in England, and of the order to Colonel Herbert Stewart, who led, to return. One loudly-expressed opinion was that the march might have been continued to Berber—concerning which great doubt existed at the time as to whether it had fallen into the hands of the rebels—without endangering the troopers, and that having been accomplished, terror would have been struck in the hearts of the tribes still wavering on the east bank of the Nile. Indignation was not slow to show itself in different parts of England, and for a time the Government were sternly attacked for what was held to be their weakness and vacillation in withdrawing the troops from the district lying inland from Suakim. Still more vehement was the outcry when peremptory orders were received by General Graham that he must forthwith evacuate the Eastern Soudan, leaving a sufficient force only to guard Suakim. This retrograde movement, as it was termed, was denounced as placing a premium on the temptation to Osman to return and harass Suakim and the whole country for miles upon miles around, and a direct inducement to various tribes to join him who had not hitherto done so, and as a positive invitation for those in whose eyes he had

lost prestige to turn again to him. On the other hand, an equal number of persons at home applauded the decision of the Gladstone Ministry to withdraw the expeditionary force, contending with the Government that it was not in any degree essential to advance on Berber or to attempt, what was practically impossible, the pursuit of Osman into the hills and rocky defiles. With the Government they were content to believe that the rebels had been taught such a lesson at El Teb, and also at Tamasi, that they would never seek to collect again in large numbers and follow Osman against the British soldiery. In fine, argued they, no more could be done. If the British advanced into the mountains they could but fight the rebels when they chose to fight them, and for as long as they held out. Had the cavalry gone to Berber even, they further contended, nothing could be accomplished, and once they had passed, the road would be no safer. Yet, again, they reminded those opposed to them, the hot season was at hand, and it would be the height of folly to remain where the gain was not definitely in view.

Wisely, or unwisely, the British Ministry had decided as already stated, and by degrees cavalry and infantry left the country.

Of public opinion in Great Britain and Ireland as reflected in the two Houses of Parliament we propose to treat anon.

CHAPTER XII.

KHARTOUM AGAIN—PAINFUL REFLECTIONS—SPREAD OF THE REBELLION — ALARMING SITUATION — RELIEF PRAYED FOR—PREPARATIONS FOR EVACUATION—THE TELEGRAPHIC COMMUNICATION CUT OFF—MR. POWER'S SELF-ABNEGATION—FURTHER ADVANCE OF THE MAHDI —KHARTOUM DESERTED—THE SOUDAN DESEET—ITS STERILITY—THE NILE—SOLITUDE AND DESOLATION—KOROSKO—ABU AHMED—BERBER—SHENDY.

HAVING dealt closely with the transpiry of events in the Eastern Soudan according to their sequence, and shown how the victories of Osman Digna, whom the Mahdi afterwards described as the apple of his eye, were rendered nugatory by the crushing defeats administered by the British at Teb and Tamasi, we must now speak of occurrences at Khartoum and other cities in the Great Soudan proper. It was here where the focus of the rebellion remained, and where, at Khartoum in particular, the anxious thoughts and overwhelming fears of the British nation were centred, and where, alas, were lost lives England held most dear; men, the remembrance of whom will never fade so long as memory and history endure; where Gordon, the wonder and the admiration of the whole world, and the very essence of all that was noble and good, died heroically, a martyr's death, for honour,

country, and poor, lost people who esteemed him as father, saviour, and demi-god.

When last we spoke in detail of Khartoum and the garrisons of Senaar, upon the Blue Nile, and between the Blue Nile and the White Nile, further west, the situation was growing desperate in the extreme. Hicks Pasha's force had been totally annihilated, and with giant strides the rebellion was spreading east, west, north and south. Khartoum was threatened, in common with other fortified cities, and constant rumour had it that the Mahdi intended to surround and attack the place at the earliest opportunity. His head-quarters, at El Obeid, were only 230 miles away, and there was every reason to suppose that while being assaulted from without Khartoum would be eaten by treachery and inherent weakness within. Colonel de Coetlogan, who had been appointed commandant by the Egyptian Government, telegraphed at the latter end of 1883 that Khartoum and Senaar could not hold out two months' time. There would not, he said, be any food. All supplies were cut off to save what remained of the army of the Soudan. A retreat, he held, should be made on Berber at once, and by a combined movement from Berber to Suakim that route should be opened. Reinforcements arriving could not reach Khartoum, except by land, and for that a very large force was necessary, and there were no supplies for them if they did arrive. The river route could not be relied upon, as it could be stopped any day where mountains overhang the river, which at that point is narrow and shallow. There were only two steamers at Khartoum that could do towing work; both were small, of no power, and old. To carry a force by river would be very difficult in a month's time, even if unattacked. The troops that were left were the refuse of the army, mostly old and blind. "Again, I say," repeated Colonel Coetlogan, "the only way of saving what remains is to attempt a general retreat on Berber."

Sir Evelyn Baring having requested Lord Granville to agree to the appointment of Mr. Power, a Dublin gentleman travelling in the Soudan, as British vice-consul at Khartoum, the Foreign Secretary gave his consent, and on the last day, save one, in the year, Mr. Power despatched the following message:—"It would be, perhaps, well to let you know the precise situation at Khartoum. The European and loyal population are beginning to think that they have been either forgotten or abandoned by the Government at Cairo. The state of affairs here is very desperate; we know that twenty-three days ago the Mahdi was assembling a great army to attack us, and, to an Arab, Obeid is only an eleven days' march from here. Some do the distance in nine days. What number he will bring I cannot say, but we have here, including gunners and sentries, in all but 3,000, to hold four miles of earthworks, on which are a few old bronze guns and one Krupp field-piece; this number of men would not properly hold the walls, and it leaves us without any reserve or relief to move to a threatened place in case of attack. It also forbids us having any guard in the city, which, in case of attack, will be at the mercy of an undisguisedly rebel population. At present, we are not strong enough to seize the well-known ringleaders or agents of the Mahdi. This is well known to the Government, yet over forty days have elapsed since it heard news of our situation here, and there are, as yet, no signs of a relieving column. We have not yet even heard if they have arrived at Assiout, eight hours from Cairo. On the 27th last month, the Khedive telegraphed most distinctly that Zebehr Pasha and his Bedouins had left Cairo two days before. He said that Baker was leaving Suez, yet I find that the papers of the 4th inst. state that neither one nor the other have left Cairo, and that Zebehr has, before leaving, to raise, arm, and, I suppose, train 1,000 negroes. In three days this town may be in the hands of the rebels, yet there has been an attempt to

prevent Kanah and Duem garrisons from joining us. If Khartoum falls, all Lower Egypt goes, as the Mahdi avows his intention of sweeping across the Suez Canal to Arabia. If Khartoum falls, every man from here to Assiout will be in arms to join him as he passes. In Khartoum many most respectable people who would wish to be loyal to the Khedive believe him to be a true prophet. Ibrahim Pasha and Colonel Coetlogan will, of course, attempt to hold the town while they can get a man to stand, but I fail to see how the earthworks can be held with the present force, even if the population remain quiet. On Christmas Day Ibrahim Pasha told me that every house in Khartoum had arms in it, and we are not strong enough to have domiciliary visits carried out." After praising the efforts of Colonel Coetlogan and enumerating what he had done towards strengthening the town, Mr. Power concluded by saying there were but a few rifles in the arsenal, not enough to provide for accidents amongst the soldiers.

A fortnight prior to this Mr. Power had written that he was informed there had been a good harvest, and that there was then in Khartoum a provision of corn for one year for the civilian population, independent of the military stores.

On the 4th January, 1884, the garrisons from El Kanah and Duem arrived at Khartoum, where there were nearly 3,000 men, but this did not alter the resolve of the Egyptian Government, acting on the advice of Mr. Gladstone's Ministry, to abandon the Soudan from Wady Halfa southwards, and on the 11th January, the Governor of Khartoum was authorised to prepare measures for sending to Berber the women and children and all those of the civil population who wished to leave Khartoum.

The telegraph wire had been cut between Khartoum and Senaar, and a steamer had been sent up the Blue Nile to convey orders for all detachments on that river to

assemble at Senaar. This steamer was obliged to return owing to the inability of the occupants to land.

Among those invited to leave Khartoum in pursuance of the policy of abandonment was Mr. Power, he receiving a special communication from Sir E. Baring, and he wrote in reply that he very well understood that he was not bound by the Government to remain as Consul. He, however, declined to leave, first as *Times* correspondent, and, secondly, that he might take part in the defence. He had seen "the beginning of it," and would like to stay to the last, to set a good example to very many who would wish to go to Cairo. He was well armed, and able to run his chance, and he hoped Sir E. Baring would believe that if anything happened to him the English Government or the Khedive were in no way responsible, as it was his own wish to stay "and give what help he could." He was, he stated, "wholly without encumbrance."

That the hosts of the Mahdi were advancing on Khartoum was only too true, for, on the 18th January, large numbers had occupied the country between that place and Senaar, and they tenanted the banks of the Nile below Duem, rendering it impassable.

At Cairo, it was decided to send Abdul Kader Pasha, the Minister of War, to Khartoum, to superintend the withdrawal of the garrisons from the Soudan. It was acknowledged that the operation would be one of great difficulty, but it was believed he was the best man for the purpose, he having an intimate acquaintance with the Soudan.

As we shall see, Abdul Kader was not sent out, the glorious Gordon being a few days afterwards appointed to the office, as well as to that of Governor-General of the Soudan.

Much has been said of Khartoum in these pages already, and much more remains to be said in connection with it. A description of the city should be given, therefore, without further delay.

Khartoum is a city wherein the population has

changed considerably, ever and anon, according to events. At one time upwards of 30,000 persons found accommodation within its walls, and, again, not one half that number have remained. As a rule the dwellings of the people have been constructed of mud, and present very little difference either as to interior or exterior. "Indeed, architecture is in an extremely primitive condition; the arrangement of the streets is just what might be expected," says one writer (Mr. Melly), "from the aspect of the houses. There are no spacious thoroughfares; here and there appears something like a square or space, but the perspective generally is by no means such as would satisfy the humblest European judgment in the art of building. The better class of houses have been possessed either by the Government official or by European residents. In some there are approaches to luxury, in others to comfort; it is but fair to acknowledge that, with the addition of delightful gardens, and a pleasant climate, it is not difficult to reconcile one's self to a residence within mud walls." The only building with any pretensions to importance is the Hukumdarieha, or residence of the Governor of Hukumdar. It is a building situate close to the Nile, which flows past, and the steamers which form the Nile flotilla, and which originally numbered 15, are beached while the river is at its lowest, and lie under the protection of the Palace guns. Sixty or seventy years ago, Shendy, 100 miles nearer Suakim, and on the Nile, was the principal town in this region, but when the Soudan was conquered by Mehemet Ali Pasha, Khartoum was made the base of operations, just as it has been since. It lies in a very favourable condition for protection from assaults from without, being situate on the left bank of the Blue Nile, and rather more than three miles south of its confluence with the White Nile, at the northern point of the Island of Tuti. The channel south of that island affords a slightly nearer approach to the White Nile, coming out immediately opposite the fortified camp of Omdurman, whence Colonel Hicks set out on his fatal expedi-

tion. Travellers have described its appearance, as they approached it by the river, as a long mud wall, with a few buildings peeping over it.

By-the-by, the names of the two rivers, Blue Nile and White Nile, are misnomers, the White Nile being of a pale, opaque azure, while the Blue Nile, or eastern tributary, is dyed a deep red by the earth that it brings down from the highlands of Abyssinia.

The town of Khartoum is surrounded by a wall and a ditch, except in the part where it is protected by the Blue Nile, though a large garrison is always required to guard it to its full extent against a numerous enemy. Being at the fork of the two rivers forming the Nile proper, its natural advantages as a stronghold are apparent.

Besides being a town of considerable commercial importance, virtually it is the gateway through which all communication between the north and south must pass. Caravans laden with strange-shaped bales of ostrich feathers, hides, drugs, copper, ivory, and ebony, pass through from the great Nubian desert to Suakim and the Red Sea, and its barterings of grain and gums for European goods, and busy life, have bespoken a busy life that might be largely increased. Khartoum is also the centre of the ship or boat-building trade on the Upper Nile, and several of the neighbouring villages on the river are inhabited exclusively by the people employed in these works. These are mostly natives. The majority of the population, which is motley enough in character, including Turks, Greeks, Jews, Egyptians, Nubians, and many kinds of negroes, were engaged in trade, while the Dongolowee element was for some time recruited for soldiers or ivory-hunters for the interior of Africa by the ivory-merchants who armed, equipped, and furnished them with means for purchasing the tusks from the natives. Ruins found in its neighbourhood testify not merely to the extent of the power of the Pharaohs, but also to the antiquity of its claims to be considered the most advantageous site for a

city at the junction of the two great streams which become the Egyptian Nile.

Anent the regions which separate Khartoum from Egypt proper—from Cairo, Alexandria, and the other cities and towns—and the Red Sea, lying in our course from England to this city, it is very forcibly said of them, and the Soudan as a whole, that the maze of road and river presents a puzzling confusion. Most of these roads, threading their way through the half explored regions lying to the south and west, converge on Khartoum, to which, also, rolls down the traffic of the great twin rivers Bahr-el-Abiad, or White Nile, and the Bahr-el-Azrak, or Blue Nile. From that centre a constant trade finds the main routes to the outer world, namely, down the river to Berber, 220 miles east-by-north, and thence by caravan to Suakim, 280 miles, and lying, as we all know, upon the Red Sea coast, or following the river still further to Abu Ahmed, 350 ^{Hand} miles from Khartoum in a northerly direction, thence crossing the Atmoor Desert to Korosko, 230 miles nearer Cairo, and so down the Nile to the capital of Egypt. The first follows, now by boat and now by camel, the river's winding course; the shorter route goes across the thirsty desert of Atmoor. But, practically, the former is very little used, the many rapids, or cataracts, interrupting the river's course, and the length of time required for making the river journey, limiting the number of travellers to an occasional Darfur or Bedaween caravan. The most direct southerly route lies across the desert from Korosko, at the knee formed by the Nile between Assouan and Wady Halfa, to Abu Ahmed, at the corresponding bend, 250 miles further south. "Korosko itself is but a poor-looking collection of mud huts, clustering together in two or three batches, amid a wild arena of desert and sand, and borrowing what animation it has from the constant starting and arriving of its caravans. Yet it is not unpicturesque, and, flanked by the luxuriant palm groves of the river, and the desert rampart of the south, shows a wonderful

contrast of colours. The tall sand-swept hills of its desert hem it in on all sides, and extend to the north in endless waves of rock and valley, like some ocean petrified in a stormy wind. Through this trails the route to Khartoum, winding its dreary length amongst a succession of bleak gorges, whose ledges and valleys glitter with the wind-silted sand, while above and around the glare of the sun is reflected from the glistening rocks. A weird realm of dreariness it is, forming a fit home for Solitude and Monotony.

“Most organic life shuns this vale of desolation. The passage through its arid waste may be accomplished by ordinary travellers in ten days, during which time water has to be carried in skins, since the few wells met with on this road yield the most unpalatable of liquids. Greatly relieved is the traveller on leaving the arid waste of the 250 miles of desert he has traversed, on entering the peaceful village of Abu Ahmed, where he once more strikes the Nile.” Of the course of the Nile above Abu Ahmed the most important station is the town of Berber. From this point northwards, for 1,500 miles, not a rivulet swells the stream.

Berber, although decidedly unattractive, as viewed from the river, presents a very pretty front when approached by land. Its bright gardens, and foliage peeping out from among the mud huts, and white houses of its richer inhabitants, give it a welcome look of contrast in the surrounding sterility. After passing the town the river scenery grows flat and uninteresting, and its breadths much broken and interspersed with sandbanks and mud-flats. On many of these islands may be seen swarms of aquatic birds dressed in their bright eastern plumage; crocodiles, too, and hippopotami, which have been hitherto more or less rare, become quite common. Then Shendy is reached and, ultimately Khartoum “heaves in sight.”

CHAPTER XIII.

GORDON!—INTERVIEW AT SOUTHAMPTON—GORDON AND THE CONGO—HIS OPINION OF THE SOUDAN AND THE MAHDI—DIFFICULTIES OF EVACUATION—SUMMONED TO LONDON—APPOINTMENT TO RELIEVE THE SOUDAN GARRISONS—COLONEL STEWART TO BE GORDON'S COMPANION—THE START—EN ROUTE TO THE SOUDAN—INSTRUCTIONS TO GORDON—THE GENERAL'S MEMORANDUM—REMARKS BY COLONEL STEWART—ARRIVAL AT CAIRO—FIRMAN FROM THE KHEDIVE—GORDON'S APPOINTMENT COMMENDED.

MAJOR-GENERAL CHARLES GEORGE GORDON—a name which thrills one with mingled feelings of liveliest pride and profoundest regret—who had been Governor-General of the Soudan from 1874 to 1879, was, on the 8th January, 1884, interviewed, at what was nominally his home outside Southampton, by a special correspondent despatched on behalf of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The interview was a very happy thought indeed on the part of the energetic management in Northumberland Street, because General Gordon was, above all others, just the man to give an opinion upon the vast country which the Egyptian Government had, prompted by the British Cabinet, determined to abandon, after withdrawing, as we have already stated, the beleaguered garrisons at Khartoum, Senaar, and elsewhere. Gordon had only arrived on the previous day from Belgium, after arranging preliminaries

with the King, who had appointed him as his representative on a mission to the Congo, an enormous territory on the west coast of Africa in which His Majesty has evinced the most constant practical interest.

During the course of this interview Gordon remarked that the Eastern Soudan was indispensable to Egypt, that it would cost far more for the English to retain their hold upon Egypt proper if they abandoned their hold of the Eastern Soudan to the Mahdi or the Turk than it would to retain a hold upon the Eastern Soudan by the aid of such material as existed in the provinces. Darfur and Kordofan must, he said, be abandoned, but the provinces to the east of the White Nile should be retained and north of Senaar. One aspect of the question was, What was going to be done with the 6,000 men at Khartoum? Were the garrisons in Darfur, in Bahr Gazelle, Gondokoro to be sacrificed, whose only offence was loyalty to their Sovereign? They were, it was urged, to retire upon Wady Halfa; but Gondokoro was 1,500 miles from Khartoum, and Khartoum was only 350 miles from Wady Halfa. How would they move the 6,000 men from Khartoum, to say nothing of other places, and all the Europeans in that city, through the desert to Wady Halfa. Whatever was decided about evacuation, they could not evacuate, because the army could not be moved. Surrender must be made absolutely to the Mahdi, or Khartoum must be defended at all hazards. The latter was the only course which ought to be entertained. There was no serious difficulty about it. The Mahdi's forces would fall to pieces of themselves, but if in a moment of panic orders were issued for the abandonment of the whole of the Eastern Soudan, a blow would be struck against the security of Egypt and the peace of the East which might have fatal consequences.

It will be remembered that the British Government had determined to protect the towns on the Red Sea littoral in the Eastern Soudan.

The great evil was not at Khartoum, General Gordon contended, but at Cairo. It was the weakness at Cairo which produced disaster in the Soudan. It was because Hicks was not adequately supported at the first, but was thrust forward upon an impossible enterprise by the men who had refused him supplies when a decisive blow might have been struck, that the Western Soudan had been sacrificed. Nubar Pasha was the one supremely able man among Egyptian Ministers, and should be left to deal with the Soudan in his own way. Sir Samuel Baker, who possessed the essential energy and single tongue requisite for the office, might, he said, be appointed Governor-General of the Soudan, and he might take his brother as Commander-in-Chief. It would cost two millions sterling to relieve the garrisons and quell the revolt, but that expenditure would have to be incurred in any way. At first, until the country was pacified, the Soudan would need a subsidy of £200,000 a year from Egypt. But this would be temporary.

So far from it being impossible to make an arrangement with the Mahdi, he strongly suspected that he was a mere puppet put forward by Hyas, Zebehr's father-in-law, and the largest slave-owner in Obeid, and that he had assumed a religious title to give colour to his defence of the popular rights. There was one subject which General Gordon could not imagine anyone could differ about. That was the impolicy of announcing the intention to evacuate Khartoum. Even if Egypt was bound to do so, they should have said nothing about it. The moment it was known they had given up the game, every man would go over to the Mahdi. All men worshipped the rising sun. The difficulties of evacuation would be largely increased, if indeed the withdrawal of the garrison was not rendered impossible. The safety in Egypt was to do something for the people. That was to say, they must reduce their rent, rescue them from the usurers, and retrench expenditure.

A few days subsequent to this interview telegrams were exchanged between Lord Granville and Sir E. Baring at Cairo—the former having heard that Gordon was prepared to go straight to Suakim and proceed to the heart of the Soudan for the purpose of superintending the withdrawal of the garrisons. The Foreign Secretary asked the British Consul's opinion in the matter, and the latter at once replied that he was just the man for the purpose. Lord Granville, it should be stated, had communicated with Sir E. Baring in the previous month to the same effect, and was answered that the Egyptian Government were averse to employing General Gordon, mainly on the ground that the appointment of a Christian in high command would probably alienate the tribes who remained faithful. Upon this the subject dropped, and the Egyptian Government turned for a short period to Abdul Kader, formerly Governor at Khartoum, as previously mentioned.

On the 16th January Gordon received a telegram while with his sisters near Southampton, summoning him to London, and at the earliest possible moment he had an interview at the War Office with Lord Granville, Lord Hartington (the War Minister), the First Lord of the Admiralty (Lord Northbrook), and Sir Charles Dilke (President of the Local Government Board), when he expressed his confidence that he could establish a good native government at Khartoum, and relieve, or withdraw, the garrisons that had been beleaguered so long. He was forthwith appointed to the task. In the course of five hours (on the 18th January), after telegraphing to Southampton, "Get my uniform ready and two pairs of patent leather boots," Gordon was *en route* for Khartoum. He had "looked up" Colonel Stewart, who was in the city on behalf of the Government on the last occasion in the early months of 1883, and to whom we have adverted more than once, and the two crossed that night to France, which

they traversed, embarked at Brindisi, sailed thence to Port Said, and on the 25th January the two were at Cairo.

On the 19th January Lord Granville wrote to General Gordon as under:—

“Her Majesty’s Government are desirous that you should proceed at once to Egypt to report to them on the military situation in the Soudan, and on the measures which it may be advisable to take for the security of the Egyptian garrisons still holding positions in that country, and for the safety of the European population in Khartoum. You are also desired to consider and report upon the best mode of effecting the evacuation of the interior of the Soudan, and upon the manner in which the safety and the good administration by the Egyptian Government of the ports on the sea-coast can best be secured. In connection with this subject you should pay especial consideration to the question of the steps that may usefully be taken to counteract the stimulus which it is feared may possibly be given to the slave trade by the present insurrectionary movement and by the withdrawal of the Egyptian authority from the interior. You will be under the instructions of Her Majesty’s Agent and Consul-General at Cairo, through whom your reports to Her Majesty’s Government should be sent, under flying seal. You will consider yourself authorized and instructed to perform such other duties as the Egyptian Government may desire to intrust to you, and as may be communicated to you by Sir E. Baring. You will be accompanied by Colonel Stewart, who will assist you in the duties thus confided to you. On your arrival in Egypt you will at once communicate with Sir E. Baring, who will arrange to meet you, and will settle with you whether you should proceed direct to Suakin, or should go yourself, or despatch Colonel Stewart to Khartoum *viâ* the Nile.”

The following telegram was received from Sir E. Baring by Lord Granville on the 19th January:— 1884

“I was very glad to learn from your lordship's telegram of the 18th inst. that General Gordon and Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart are coming to Egypt to report on the military situation in the Soudan. I am of opinion that it would be useless for these officers to proceed to Suakin, as General Baker is doing all that can be done in that quarter with the means at his disposal. They should first come to Cairo, and after discussing matters with myself and others proceed to Khartoum. It is impossible for me to leave Cairo at present, even for a couple of days, but General Sir Evelyn Wood and Colonel Watson will proceed to Port Said to meet General Gordon. I have been holding daily conferences on Soudan affairs, and was about to reply to your lordship's telegram of the 14th inst., but will now delay doing so until the arrival of General Gordon. Instructions have already been sent by the Egyptian Government to Khartoum to commence at once sending to Berber all the civil officials and non-combatants who are desirous of leaving, and for whom transport can be provided. Endeavours are also being made to secure the co-operation of the heads of tribes. Discretion has been left for the garrison of Sennaar either to retire by the Kassala route or cut its way through Khartoum. With regard to the European population, I wish to explain that very few Europeans now remain at Khartoum, and that the real difficulty is in withdrawing the native civil population, who wish to leave, and the garrison, with the wives and children of the soldiers. The position is undoubtedly one of great difficulty, but I see no reason whatever to change my opinion to the effect that the difficulties of withdrawing, great though they be, are less than those of endeavouring to hold the Soudan.”

This was followed by a further telegram from Sir E. Baring, on the same day, in which he says:—“I have no wish to underrate the difficulties of the present situation, but however great they may be, there has hitherto been

no reason for panic." On January 22nd Lord Granville forwarded to Sir E. Baring a paper containing some suggestions made by General Gordon as to the steps that should be taken with regard to affairs in the Soudan, and as to these Sir E. Baring telegraphs on January 23rd:—"All Gordon's suggestions are excellent and quite in harmony with the lines on which we have been working."

While in the Mediterranean on board the steamship *Tanjore*, General Gordon wrote the undermentioned memorandum to Lord Granville:—

"1. I understand that Her Majesty's Government have come to the irrevocable decision not to incur the very onerous duty of securing to the peoples of the Soudan a just future government. That, as a consequence, Her Majesty's Government have determined to restore to these peoples their independence, and will no longer suffer the Egyptian Government to interfere with their affairs.

"2. For this purpose, Her Majesty's Government have decided to send me to the Soudan to arrange for the evacuation of these countries, and the safe removal of the Egyptian *employés* and troops.

"3. Keeping paragraph No. 1 in view—viz., that the evacuation of the Soudan is irrevocably decided on—it will depend on circumstances in what way this is to be accomplished. My idea is that the restoration of the country should be made to the different petty Sultans who existed at the time of Mehemet Ali's conquest, and whose families still exist; that the Mahdi should be left altogether out of the calculation as regards the handing over the country; and that it should be optional with the Sultans to accept his supremacy or not. As these Sultans would probably not be likely to gain by accepting the Mahdi as their Sovereign, it is probable that they will hold to their independent positions. Thus we should have two factors to deal with—namely, the petty Sultans asserting their several independence, and the Mahdi's

party aiming at supremacy over them. To hand, therefore, over to the Mahdi the arsenals, &c., would, I consider, be a mistake. They should be handed over to the Sultans of the States in which they are placed. The most difficult question is how and to whom to hand over the arsenals of Khartoum, Dongola, and Kassala, which towns have, so to say, no old standing families, Khartoum and Kassala having sprung up since Mehemet Ali's conquest. Probably it would be advisable to postpone any decision as to these towns till such time as the inhabitants have made known their opinion.

"4. I have in paragraph 3 proposed the transfer of the lands to the local Sultans and stated my opinion that these will not accept the supremacy of the Mahdi. If this is agreed to and my supposition correct as to their action, there can be but little doubt that as far as he is able the Mahdi will endeavour to assert his rule over them, and will be opposed to any evacuation of the Government *employés* and troops. My opinion of the Mahdi's forces is, that the bulk of those who were with him at Obeid will refuse to cross the Nile, and that those who do so will not exceed 3,000 or 4,000 men, and also that these will be composed principally of black troops who have deserted, and who, if offered fair terms, would come over to the Government side. In such a case—viz., 'Sultans accepting transfer of territory and refusing the supremacy of the Mahdi, and Mahdi's black troops coming over to the Government,' resulting weakness of the Mahdi; what should be done should the Mahdi's adherents attack the evacuating columns? It cannot be supposed that these are to offer no resistance, and if in resisting they should obtain a success it would be but reasonable to allow them to follow up the Mahdi to such a position as would insure their future safe march. This is one of those difficult questions which our Government can hardly be expected to answer, but which may arise and to which I would call attention. Paragraph 1 fixes irrevocably the decision of

the Government—viz., to evacuate the territory, and, of course, as far as possible involves the avoidance of any fighting. I can, therefore, only say that having in view paragraph 1 and seeing the difficulty of asking Her Majesty's Government to give a decision or direction as to what should be done in certain cases, that I will carry out the evacuation as far as possible according to their wish to the best of my ability, and with avoidance, as far as possible, of all fighting. I would, however, hope that Her Majesty's Government will give me their support and consideration should I be unable to fulfil all their expectations.

"5. Though it is out of my province to give any opinion as to the action of Her Majesty's Government in leaving the Soudan, still I must say it would be an iniquity to reconquer these peoples and then hand them back to the Egyptians without guarantees of future good government. It is evident that this we cannot secure them without an inordinate expenditure of men and money. The Soudan is a useless possession, ever was so, and ever will be so. Larger than Germany, France, and Spain together, and mostly barren, it cannot be governed except by a Dictator who may be good or bad. If bad he will cause constant revolts. No one who has ever lived in the Soudan can escape the reflection, 'What a useless possession is this land!' Few men also can stand its fearful monotony and deadly climate.

"6. Said Pasha, the Viceroy before Ismail, went up to the Soudan with Count F. de Lesseps. He was so discouraged and horrified at the misery of the people that at Berber Count de Lesseps saw him throw his guns into the river, declaring that he would be no party to such oppression. It was only after the urgent solicitations of European Consuls and others that he reconsidered his decision. Therefore, I think Her Majesty's Government are fully justified in recommending the evacuation, inasmuch as the sacrifices necessary towards

securing a good government would be far too onerous to admit of such an attempt being made. Indeed, one may say it is impracticable at any cost. Her Majesty's Government will now leave them as God has placed them; they are not forced to fight among themselves, and they will no longer be oppressed by men coming from lands so remote as Circassia Kurdistan, and Anatolia.

"7. I have requested Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart to write his views independent of mine on the subject. I append them to this report. C. G. GORDON, Major-General."

The following was an enclosure from Colonel Stewart:—
"I have carefully read over General Gordon's observations, and cordially agree with what he states.

"2. I would, however, suggest that, as far as possible, all munitions of war be destroyed on evacuation.

"3. I quite agree with General Gordon that the Soudan is an expensive and useless possession. No one who has visited it can escape the reflection, 'What a useless possession is this land, and what a huge encumbrance on Egypt.'

"4. Handing back the territories to the families of the dispossessed Sultans is an act of justice both towards them and their people. The latter, at any rate, will no longer be at the mercy of foreign mercenaries, and if they are tyrannized over, it will be more or less their own fault. Handing back the districts to the old reigning families is also a politic act, as raising up a rival power to that of the Mahdi.

"5. As it is impossible for Her Majesty's Government to foresee all the eventualities that may arise during the evacuation, it seems to me as the more judicious course to rely on the discretion of General Gordon and his knowledge of the country.

"6. I, of course, understand that General Gordon is going to the Soudan with full powers to make all arrangements as to its evacuation, and that he is in no way to be

interfered with by the Cairo Ministers. Also that any suggestions or remarks that the Cairo Government would wish to make are to be made directly to him and Her Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary, and that no intrigues are to be permitted against his authority. Any other course would, I am persuaded, make his mission a failure. (Signed) D. H. STEWART, Lieutenant-Colonel, 11th Hussars. Steamship *Tanjore*, at sea, Jan. 22."

Arrived at Cairo, General Gordon immediately proceeded to have an interview with the Khedive and Sir E. Baring, the outcome of which will be easily gathered from the following despatches from Sir E. Baring to the Foreign Secretary:—

"Cairo, Jan. 28. My Lord,—After fully discussing Soudan affairs with General Gordon, it appeared desirable to both Nubar Pasha and myself to give him some further instructions beyond those which are contained in your Lordship's letter to him of the 18th of January. I have the honour to enclose a copy of these instructions, which will, I trust, meet with your Lordship's approval. I read the draft of the letter over to General Gordon. He expressed to me his entire concurrence in the instructions. The only suggestion he made was in connexion with the passage in which, speaking of the policy of abandoning the Soudan, I had said, 'I understand also that you entirely concur in the desirability of adopting this policy.' General Gordon wished that I should add the words, 'and that you think it should on no account be changed.' These words were accordingly added. I have, &c., E. BARING."

Enclosed, was the following:—

"*Sir E. Baring to Major-General Gordon.* Cairo, Jan. 25. Sir,—The instructions of Her Majesty's Government were conveyed to you in a letter of the 18th of January, a copy of which has been communicated to me by Lord Granville. In that letter, after drawing attention to certain points which were to engage your special atten-

tion, Lord Granville 'authorized and instructed you to perform such duties as the Egyptian Government may desire to intrust to you, and as may be communicated to you by Sir E. Baring.' I have now to indicate to you the views of the Egyptian Government on two of the points to which your special attention was directed by Lord Granville. These are (1) the measures which it may be advisable to take for the security of the Egyptian garrisons still holding positions in the Soudan, and for the safety of the European population in Khartoum; (2) the best mode of effecting the evacuation of the interior of the Soudan. These two points are intimately connected, and may conveniently be considered together. It is believed that the number of Europeans at Khartoum is very small, but it has been estimated by the local authorities that some 10,000 to 15,000 people will wish to move northwards from Khartoum only when the Egyptian garrison is withdrawn. These people are native Christians, Egyptian *employés*, their wives and children, &c. The Government of His Highness the Khedive is earnestly solicitous that no effort should be spared to ensure the retreat both of these people and of the Egyptian garrison without loss of life. As regards the most opportune time and the best method for effecting the retreat, whether of the garrisons or of the civil populations, it is neither necessary nor desirable that you should receive detailed instructions. A short time ago the local authorities pressed strongly on the Egyptian Government the necessity for giving orders for an immediate retreat. Orders were accordingly given to commence at once the withdrawal of the civil population. No sooner, however, had these orders been issued than a telegram was received from the Soudan, strongly urging that the orders for commencing the retreat immediately should be delayed. Under these circumstances, and in view of the fact that the position at Khartoum is now represented as being less critical, for the moment,

than it was a short time ago, it was thought desirable to modify the orders for the immediate retreat of the civil population, and to await your arrival. You will bear in mind that the main end to be pursued is the evacuation of the Soudan. This policy was adopted, after very full discussion, by the Egyptian Government, on the advice of Her Majesty's Government. It meets with the full approval of His Highness the Khedive, and of the present Egyptian Ministry. I understand, also, that you entirely concur in the desirability of adopting this policy, and that you think it should on no account be changed. You consider that it may take a few months to carry it out with safety. You are further of opinion that 'the restoration of the country should be made to the different petty Sultans who existed at the time of Mohammed Ali's conquest, and whose families still exist;' and that an endeavour should be made to form a confederation of those Sultans. In this view the Egyptian Government entirely concurs. It will, of course, be fully understood that the Egyptian troops are not to be kept in the Soudan merely with a view to consolidating the power of the new rulers of the country. But the Egyptian Government has the fullest confidence in your judgment, your knowledge of the country, and of your comprehension of the general line of policy to be pursued. You are, therefore, given full discretionary power to retain the troops for such reasonable period as you may think necessary in order that the abandonment of the country may be accomplished with the least possible risk to life and property. A credit of £100,000 has been opened for you at the Finance Department, and further funds will be supplied to you on your requisition when this sum is exhausted. In undertaking the difficult task which now lies before you, you may feel assured that no effort will be wanting on the part of the Cairo authorities, whether English or Egyptian, to afford you all the co-operation and support in their power. I am, &c., E. BARING."

To General Gordon were handed also two firmans from the Egyptian Government appointing him Governor-General of the Soudan, and impressing upon him the peaceable character of his mission, reminding him at the same time that it was not intended at all to send troops to his assistance. He was, in fact, to evacuate the territories in the region to which he was going, and to withdraw the troops, the Egyptian officials, and all those inhabitants who were desirous to leave. In this mission, it was stated, he was to adopt the most effective measures for the accomplishment, and after taking the necessary steps for establishing an organised government in the different provinces of the Soudan for the maintenance of order, and cessation of all disasters and incitement to revolt, he was to return. In one of the firmans also Gordon was instructed to post its contents addressed to all chief notables and people of the Soudan, announcing its evacuation by Egyptian troops, and informing them that the Soudan would be left to them, and that its rulers would be appointed from among them. He was appointed, said the second firman, to the office of Governor-General of the Soudan, because the Egyptian Government believed him fitted to deal with the situation attended by so many difficulties ; indeed, the Khedive is known to have said he could not give a better proof of his intentions than by accepting Gordon as Governor-General, with full powers to take what steps he might judge best for obtaining the end the English and Egyptian Governments had in view ; that he could not do more than delegate to Gordon his own power, and make him irresponsible arbiter of the situation. Whatever Gordon did, said the Khedive, would be well done ; whatever arrangements he made would be accepted in advance ; whatever combination he might decide upon would be binding to them ; and "in thus placing unlimited trust in the Pasha's judgment, I have only made one condition : that he should provide for the safety of the Europeans and the Egyptian civilian

element. He is now the supreme master, and my best wishes accompany him on a mission of such gravity and importance, for my heart aches at the thought of the thousands of loyal adherents whom a false step may doom to destruction." The Khedive added, he had no doubt that Gordon Pasha would do his best to sacrifice as few as possible; and should he succeed, by God's help, in accomplishing the evacuation of Khartoum and the chief ports in the Eastern Soudan, he would be entitled to the everlasting gratitude of the Egyptian people, who trembled that help might come too late. There were tremendous odds against Gordon; but the Khedive said he would hope for the best, and, as far as he and the Egyptian Government were concerned, the Pasha would find in them the most loyal and most energetic support.

Apart from the widespread gratification experienced in Egypt proper at the appointment of General Gordon as Governor-General of the Soudan, and to the execution of a mission it was admitted no other man, perhaps, was able to perform, providing it could be accomplished at all, the people of Khartoum were loud in their expressions of thankfulness, and in England the appointment was looked upon by both political parties in the State, and by the country generally, with intense satisfaction. There were those, of course, and a great number they were, who were firmly convinced that no earthly power could now save Khartoum and its people from destruction; that the besieged garrisons of Darfur, Senaar, Kassala, and those remaining in Kordofan were certain to be swallowed up by the rebels, unless a great military force were sent out, at an enormous expenditure, to crush the rebellion, or to stay its onward roll, in the vicinity of Khartoum. Gordon, they allowed, was the man for such an enterprise as that to which he was appointed; but they deemed his mission as nothing more nor less than an absolute sacrifice of his valuable life, and a postponement of that final day of reckoning with the Mahdi in the city at the confluence of the Blue

and White Niles towards which the gaze of civilization had been directed so long, and whose fortunes had fallen upon very evil times since the Mahdi captured El Obeid and the whole force of Hicks Pasha, and with it, in the understandings of the Mahdists, the power of the Egyptian Government to save. Alas! that their foreboding should so soon have had a plenitude of fulfilment.

However, on the 26th January, 1884, General Gordon started, imbued with hope, on his hazardous and daring enterprise, from Cairo to Khartoum, nearly 2,000 miles away, by dangerous river, and perilous and forbidding desert. He left with the "God-speed" of millions following him out into the great Unknown, refusing a semblance of military escort, his only companion Colonel Stewart, of the 11th Hussars, and his only trust in that Divine protection which had guided and guarded him hitherto when facing fearful odds and death in ten thousand forms.

While the heroic Gordon and the brave Stewart are upon the bosom of the mighty Nile, and upon the hump of the shambling "ship of the desert," aiming at the deliverance of numbers of their fellow creatures from something worse than ordinary death, let us sketch the life of one of the most remarkable and best of men the world has ever seen.

CHAPTER XIV.

CAREER OF CHARLES GEORGE GORDON: HIS BIRTH—AT SCHOOL—MILITARY TRAINING—IN THE CRIMEA—WITH THE BRITISH IN CHINA—IN COMMAND OF THE CHINESE—BRILLIANT EXPLOITS—HONOURS—GORDON'S RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM—DEATH NO FEARS—"THE EVER-VICTORIOUS ARMY"—TRIALS IN THE SOUDAN—GOVERNOR-GENERAL—DESPAIR—HUNTING SLAVE-DEALERS—GORDON'S ACHIEVEMENTS—RETURN TO ENGLAND.

THE son of Lieutenant-General Henry William Gordon (the descendant of a well-known and deservedly popular Highland family), and of the daughter of the famous Enderbys, ship-masters of Hull, Yorkshire, Charles George Gordon, their fourth child, was born at Woolwich, on the 28th January, 1833. Educated at Taunton, the subject of this sketch was transferred, in 1848, to the Royal Military Training School at Woolwich, but he did not show any special proclivities in the early stages of his life here, as is proved by the fact that he was smartly remonstrated with on one occasion with the words: "You will never make an officer." Passionately resenting this insult, as he esteemed it, he tore his epaulettes from his shoulder and cast them at his superior's feet. Not, however, with disgust which prevented him renewing his military studies, for he continued them with increased vigour,

surprising everyone around him, and soon obtained his commission in the Royal Engineers. He served for a short period upon the Thames fortifications, then we find him at Corfu, and in December, 1854, he sailed for the Crimea, then the scene of fierce and often inglorious meetings with the Russian forces. When the opening days of 1855 dawned upon our troops in the Crimea, exposed not only to harassing work by the very nature of their duties, but to the wild and cruel elements induced by the pitiless skies and trying atmospheric conditions, Charles George Gordon was at Balaclava. He underwent a series of privations in the trenches before Sebastopol, and during the remaining nine months of the siege he took a prominent part in the engineering operations in front of the Russian stronghold. Subsequently he played a prominent part in destroying the harbour fortifications, and gained throughout the good-will of officers and men. When the war ended Gordon was selected as Assistant Boundary Commissioner in Bessarabia, and, afterwards, he was ordered on similar duty in Armenia. Returning from the latter country, Gordon was stationed at Chatham for a short period. He proceeded, about the middle of 1860, to China, to take part in the Anglo-French operations towards compelling the Chinese to ratify the treaty concluded by Lord Elgin in the previous year, and also to exact reparation for an attack on the British squadron, fired upon from the Taku Forts. He advanced with the allies on Peking, witnessed its surrender, and also the destruction of the famous Summer Palace.

Then commenced that extraordinary independent career which has made Gordon a name that will never die. After he had been engaged for nearly two years in Northern China, fighting and surveying, the Tai-ping rebellion had, with the arrival of 1862, made such progress that the ravaging bands, led by malcontents, had marched almost within striking distance of Shanghai. The rebellion surged hither and thither, and in despair the

Chinese Government turned to the British for the appointment of some capable officer to lead the loyal troops, and eventually a crushing defeat by the rebels brought Gordon into a command of the Government levies. This alone saved them and China. The rebels soon discovered they had a new force against them. Instead of the army retiring before the revolutionists, their quarters were in turn invaded. Fushan was captured, Chanzu relieved, and, with the rank of Brigadier-General, Gordon set about ensuring greater discipline in preparation for further successes. The officers were of all nations, the men were native Chinese. These, Mr. Hake tells us, were fed, paid, and disciplined by Gordon. "He provided himself with a heavy force of artillery, ample supplies of ammunition, and had every means of transport in the way of gun carriages, and to boot. He had mantlets to protect his gunners, a pontoon equipment, bamboo ladders, planks of short tramways, and many other provisions for rapid movement in a country abounding with water. He practised his artillery both in breaching fortifications, and in covering storming parties. He instituted a system of punishment for the native force, and one for the foreign officers, who were subject, even, to instantaneous dismissal, but this only by order of the Commander himself. With an army thus organised, and with a flotilla of steamers and Chinese gunboats, he was soon prepared again to take the field." Upon Taitzan Gordon swooped with 3,000 men, with his guns, bridged the moat with his gun boats, and sent in a storming party, and captured the place. He took Soochoon, too, after a series of brilliantly executed manœuvres, became possessed of Quinsan, making it at the same time a condition that the barbarous customs of the Chinese should not be observed. Out of 2,000 prisoners, 700 joined the army. To quote Mr. Hake, "the General again met with mutiny, but his firmness once more brought the men to their senses. The mutineers absolutely sent in their demands

in writing. The General summoned the non-commissioned officers, who refused to tell either why the men would not fall in or who made the proclamation. With quiet determination Gordon told them that one in every five should be shot, an announcement which they received with groans. During this manifestation, the Commander, with great shrewdness, resolved in his own mind that the man whose groans were the most emphatic and prolonged was the ringleader. This man was a corporal. Gordon approached him, dragged him out of the rank with his own hand, and ordered two of the infantry standing by to shoot the fellow on the spot. The order was instantly obeyed. Gordon then sent the remaining non-commissioned officers into confinement for one hour, with the assurance that if, within that time, the men did not fall in, and if the name of the writer of the proclamation were not given up, every fifth man among them would be shot. This brought them to their senses. The files fell in; the writer's name was disclosed. Gordon had done justice to him some hours before; it was the loud-voiced corporal."

Afterwards, Gordon, who was ever in the front of battle, but never carried aught but a short stick, designated his magic wand, made his victorious campaigns, entirely quelling the rebellion, and thus ensuring the salvation of the Chinese Empire. He was given the highest honours the Government of China could bestow, including the honour of the "Yellow Jacket," and was endowed by the Emperor with a special gold medal. This medal was quietly disposed of, when our hero had spent everything else he had for the benefit of the poor, in augmentation of the Lancashire cotton famine fund!

The ensuing six years of his life were spent at home in working again upon the Thames fortifications, feeding the hungry, visiting the sick and dying, and in attending upon anything and everything save his own truly noble, devoted self.

As may be easily imagined, Gordon was imbued with a

deep religious spirit. Divine guidance had always been, in fact, the stronghold of his faith. "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy path." "I am," said he, "a chisel which cuts the wood. The Carpenter directs it. If I lose my edge He must sharpen it. If He puts me aside and takes another it is His own good will. None are indispensable to Him. He will do His work with a straw equally well." Writing to his friends, Gordon remarked:—"God has given you ties and anchors to this earth. You have wives and families, I, thank God, have none of them, and am free. You are only called upon at intervals to rely upon God; I am continually to do so. I mean by this that you have only great trials, such as the illness of a child, when you feel yourself utterly weak now and then. I am constantly in anxiety. The body rebels against this constant leaning on God; it is a heavy strain on it; it causes appetite to cease. Find me the man—and I will take him as my help—who utterly despises money, name, glory, honour—one who never wishes to see his home again, one who looks to God as the Source of good and controller of evil, one who has a healthy body and an energetic spirit, and one who looks on death as a release from misery. If you cannot find him, then leave me alone." "That instinctive clinging to life," says one writer, "which is natural to all men, Gordon seems to have overcome as completely as Ignatius Loyola, or John Wesley, or Cromwell's Puritans. When his poor Soudani lambs pressed him on every side with their complaints, he wrote that he must not complain if they had no thought of what he had gone through. There was only one issue to it, and that was death, and he often felt he wished it would come and relieve him. In every reference to 'death' it was to him the great release—'I value my life as naught, and should only leave weariness for perfect peace.'" Gordon believed in communion with the great Giver of all. He detested

cant and pure orthodoxy; he maintained that a true perception of the Gospel was entire forgetfulness of self, utter absence of any pretension, and the complete refusal to accept the world's praise or judgment. Fatalism was with him something more than a name—"No comfort is equal to that which he who has God for his stay, who believes not in words, but in fact, that all things are ordained to happen and must happen. He who has this belief has already died, and is free from the annoyance of this life. I do not say I have attained to this perfect state, but I have it as my great desire."

One peculiar and extraordinary instance of his desire for life-eternal. In 1879, Gordon was commissioned to go once more to the King of Abyssinia to endeavour to close a treaty with him. He went by way of Massowah, and had several interviews with His Majesty, all of which, however, were of non-effect. On his way home he was arrested by the King's order, and taken into his presence. Seated on his throne, and surrounded by all the pomp and circumstance of his court, he looked for nothing else than that Gordon should approach him with the most abject tokens of humility. But Gordon seized a chair or stool and placing it on a level with the seat of the Abyssinian monarch, told him he was his equal. In a terrible rage, the King reminded him that he could kill him on the spot, whereupon Gordon immediately exclaimed that he might do so, as he was quite ready! Dumbfounded for a moment, the King at last exclaimed, "Art thou ready to die?" to which Gordon repeated that he was, adding that, by putting him to death, the King would do what his own religious scruples prevented him from doing for himself, "relieve me from my troubles and misfortunes." Assured that his power had no power for Gordon, he released him, and after suffering awful privations he eventually reached the Red Sea coast, where a British warship was in waiting. In this perilous journey alone he had travelled 800 miles on mules!

"Such was Gordon's faith, one that hoped and believed all things in a spirit of charity, and one which he declared over and over again sustained him in life, and cheered him in face of death."

To resume. On resigning command of "the Ever Victorious Army," and subsequent to his work on the Thames fortifications, Gordon was, in 1871, while bearing the rank of Colonel in the British Army, and "Ti-tu," the highest rank in the Chinese Army, appointed British Commissioner at Galatz, where he remained for three years. He was then appointed successor to Sir Samuel Baker—by the Khedive—first as governor of the tribes on the Upper Nile, and, later on, he received the distinction of Governor-General of the Soudan. From the beginning of 1874 until 1879 he governed, as we are informed on unimpeachable authority, the vast region of the Soudan, with satisfaction to the Cairo administration, which was extremely hard to please, and with credit to himself—that Soudan which is much more extensive than the greater portion of Europe. He did much to restore the finances, and he inaugurated the necessary measures for the utter abolition of domestic slavery and the slave trade. He firmly established the power of the Khedive on the Nile by the use of steamers, in Darfur by the overthrow of Zebehr's son Suleiman, and on the Abyssinian frontier by a treaty with King John.

It was at Gondokoro, far away in Equatorial Africa, that he really commenced his work. When he arrived there in September only two of his companions were strong, and one of them had had a severe fever. Of the other nine who started with him two had died, one had been sent away invalided, two were too ill to be removed, two others were so ill as to be useless; one, though still moving about, was far from well, and Gordon was reduced to a shadow. He found, however, a somewhat healthier station, and made it the centre of operations, and in ten months had established Egyptian

authority in the district. He connected station after station by chains of posts, a day's journey from each other, and it took him 22 months before, in this Equatorial province, he got as far as Foweira. We gather from Mr. Hake's work that his aim and motive was to relieve the suffering people from horrible oppression, and curb, if not suppress, the abominable slave-hunters and dealers. At Bahr Gazelle he found a people with complexions the colour of slate pencils. He found wretched subjects at Gondokoro. Still, though the state of the people was bad as it well could be, he was confident that he could relieve their sufferings. The toughest part of his task, he felt, was to win their confidence. This he achieved by kindness, charity, and a resolute hand against their tyrants the slavers. "The chief among them he cast into prison. Afterwards he discovered useful qualities in them, and took them into his employ, dealing with them, in fact, as he had dealt with the Chinese rebels, whom he first conquered and then enlisted." He was always accessible, and he inspired his soldiers with something of his own inexhaustible ardour and confidence.

Still, it seemed to him, at times, that his task was too great, and, lost in momentary despair, he would write that if he could only stop the hated slave traffic he would willingly be shot. "I can scarcely see any hope of averting this evil. Now comes the question, could I sacrifice my life and remain in Kordofan and Darfur? To die quickly would be to me nothing, but the long crucifixion that a residence in these horrid countries entails appalls me. I do not think I can face the cross of staying here simply on physical grounds. I have written to the Khedive to say I will not remain as Governor-General, for I feel I cannot govern the country to satisfy myself. Shall I remain governor of the West Soudan (the Mahdi's country) and crush the slave-dealers? Many will say it is a worthy cause to die in. I agree, if the death were

speedy ; but it is a long and weary one, and for the moment I cannot face it." Constantly was Gordon's soul vexed by the treachery of the Egyptian and Arab officials ; he had to encounter bribery everywhere, and to defeat the most cunning schemes for carrying on the slave traffic.

It was in 1876 that, overcome with the sense that with the authority he had and the limited power behind him, he relinquished his position, and once more he was in England. But for 12 months only. He could not resist an appeal from the Khedive. He was appointed Governor-General of the Soudan, with Darfur and the Equatorial provinces, at this time a country 1,640 miles long, with an average breadth of 660 miles, or, on the whole, larger in extent than Great Britain and Ireland, Holland, Germany, Belgium, France, Austria, and Spain. He was also to negotiate with the King of Abyssinia for a settlement of the disputes between that country and Egypt. Having visited Bogos he hastened to Khartoum by way of Kassala, Katarif, the Akhara river and Senaar. Arrived at Khartoum, all the address he gave was—instead of the usual long speech of Governors on instalment—"With the help of God I will hold the balance level." In the next three days Gordon gave from his private purse a thousand pounds—this was in addition to having refused to take £8,000 of the £10,000 per annum the Khedive offered him as salary—and he opened public boxes for the receipt of complaints, all of which received his personal attention. At Khartoum—everywhere—almost with lightning-like succession, Gordon traversed the Soudan, and on the first year alone of his governorship he had ridden 3,840 miles through the deserts on the backs of camels.

His calculation was that the loss of life in Darfur alone from 1875 to 1879 was 16,000 Egyptians and 50,000 natives ; in the Bahr Gazelle 15,000—all through fighting for slaves ; besides which, he reckoned that slaves to the number of nearly 100,000 had been lost by violent death.

However, Gordon broke the neck of the slave trade by exhausting and almost superhuman efforts, thereby securing the affection of the people, though bringing down upon him the curses of the slavers, with, it was said, Zebehr at their head. "In short, Gordon's rule in the Soudan was glorious to himself, satisfactory to the Khedive, and gratifying to Englishmen, as a practical demonstration of the qualities which they must wish to see most common amongst their countrymen. When it closed, there was no one to carry on the work he had so well begun, and the vast region which he had nearly wrested from the hands of the slave-dealers was allowed to lapse into their possession. The apathy or selfish designs of the Egyptian officials allowed matters to reach such a pass within their jurisdiction that the power of the Mahdi had become formidable, and had been granted time to consolidate itself almost before the outer world was aware of its existence."

No wonder, then, that the minds of men were turned towards Gordon as the one individual who could, by his influence and grand power of energy, determination and control, when the fiat went forth five years afterwards that the Soudan was to be abandoned—providing it was for mortal to command success—bring away the garrisons and leave behind him a settled form of government.

However, Gordon had scarcely come back to England ere he accompanied Lord Ripon to India as his military secretary, an acceptance of office which created far more surprise than his sudden resignation on landing on arriving at Bombay. The only reason adduced for this resignation is that Gordon could not conscientiously agree with the imprisonment of Yakooob Khan by the Indian Government on the ground that he was implicated in the Cabul massacre.

From India General Gordon proceeded to China; and gave the Government sound, practical advice at a time hostilities with Russia were pending; he stepped once

more upon his native soil, left again for office in the Mauritius; went thence to try to settle the Basutoland dispute amicably; paid a brief visit to England, and left early in 1883 for Palestine, where he enjoyed a rest he sorely needed. It was in December of that year that the King of the Belgians heard of his arrival once more in England, that he sent for him to Brussels, and completed those arrangements for going on the Congo mission which, through the desire of the British and Egyptian Governments that he should go out to the Soudan, were destined never to be carried into effect.

CHAPTER XV.

GORDON AND STEWART ALONE—ARRIVAL AT ABU HAMED
—“HOPEFUL OF SUCCESS”—THE GENERAL’S PLAN
OF ACTION—MILITARY AID NOT NECESSARY—AT
BERBER—COUNCIL OF NOTABLES ELECTED—CON-
FIDENCE—ENTRY INTO KHARTOUM—GREAT REJOICINGS
—ACTIVE OPERATIONS—THE DELIVERER AT WORK—
RELEASE OF THE OPPRESSED—MAHDI PROCLAIMED
RULER OF KORDOFAN—PROCLAMATION ON THE SLAVE
TRADE—CONSTERNATION IN ENGLAND—GORDON PRO-
POSES ZEBEHR PASHA AS HIS SUCCESSOR TO GOVERNOR-
GENERALSHIP—INDIGNATION—ARGUMENTS FOR AND
AGAINST ZEBEHR.

It was confidently stated that General Gordon would, before going on direct to Khartoum, proceed by way of Suakim, leave there and endeavour to appease the tribes between that port and Berber, and then continue his journey along the Nile to his goal. This anticipation was quickly dispelled when Gordon and Stewart left Cairo on the 26th January, 1884, by a route which left Suakim and the Eastern Soudan entirely out of their course. They took boat down the Nile as far as Assouan, reached Korosko, and then began a journey across the desert to Abu Hamed, a distance of 250 miles—a desert whose appearance we have previously described: “a weird realm of dreariness, forming a fit home for solitude and

monotony; where, in the deeper valleys, some sickly doom-palm or dwarfed mimosa struggles for existence amongst the surrounding sterility, where most organic life shuns the vale of desolation—where the ferocious Ababdeh Arabs are to be met with, and where the tract is marked out by countless carcasses of camels prevented by the dry heat from decaying, and now and again by the dry stone-heaped grave of their drivers buried in the wild fastnesses of sand and rock, where the mirage is almost continual, the horizon wearing the garb of sea and lake; mountains far beyond the range of vision reversing themselves in the air as if standing on their summits or taking fantastic shapes and forms.” While riding across this arid waste the greatest anxiety was felt in England for his safety. Reports were current that he had been murdered, and that thus early was his mission rendered nugatory. Keen was the relief, therefore, when news came on the 11th February that Stewart and he had made Abu Hamed.

From Abu Hamed, where he actually arrived on the 8th February, Gordon telegraphed that he was hopeful as to the success of his mission, that several telegrams had awaited him expressive of pleasure at his appointment, saying that so far all was well, and requesting that a few robes of honour and swords of distinction among the chiefs of tribes should be sent after him: “Don’t be uneasy on our account,” he telegraphed, “as we are quite well and happy,” adding, “the whole thing is right.” At this place, 350 miles from Khartoum, 1,415 from Cairo—(by river), much shorter, of course, by the Korosko desert—and over 3,000 miles from England—Gordon drew up a memorandum in which he said he considered that on his arrival at Khartoum his first object should be to send to Cairo the families of all deceased employés, soldiers, &c., and to attempt the pacification of the country, and the reopening of communications. When these objects were fulfilled he would ask the two Govern-

ments to discuss what was to follow. "You are aware," he continued, "that a regular system of posts and telegraphs exists; legal courts, financial and other departments are established, and that, in short, the country has, during a considerable time, been accustomed to a more or less controlling and directing government. To disturb, if not annihilate this system at a moment's notice would appear to me to hand over the country to complete anarchy. Consider what the situation will be. Let it be supposed that the Soudan, or at least the East Soudan, is tranquillised, its administration 'Soudanised,' native Mudirs appointed, refugees all sent to Cairo, the Equatorial and Bahr Gazelle provinces evacuated, and the Egyptian troops ready to leave. Suppose that the firman dissolving the connection between Egypt and the Soudan is ready, and the result will inevitably be that each Mudir will aim at securing his own independence, and that a period of violent and protracted connection will ensue, which may very possibly react prejudicially on Egypt, owing to the intimate connection which has for so long obtained between the two countries! Hence, I would suggest the government of Egypt should continue to maintain its position as a Suzerain Power, nominate the Governor-General and Mudirs, and act as a Supreme Court of Appeal. I would, therefore, beg earnestly that evacuation, but not abandonment, be the programme to be followed, and that a firman with which I am provided be changed into one recognising moral control and suzerainty." General Gordon showed the memorandum to Colonel Stewart before despatching it, and the gallant Colonel entirely complied with its spirit.

Prior to despatching this telegram, General Gordon had forwarded one stating that, having got away the Egyptian employes' families and their belongings, he proposed to replace them by native Soudan officials, under himself, thus forming the foundation of the future government of the Soudan; to concentrate the neighbouring tribes.

against the Hadendowa, and to open up the road from Suakim to Berber and Suakim to Kassala; to relieve Senaar and the triangle between the Blue and the White Niles; to send up an expedition of five steamers to bring down the families of the troops of the Equatorial province and Bahr Gazelle; to arrange at Dongola for the exodus of those who remained at Darfur. For this programme he needed five officers to assist him as his agents (a request almost immediately countermanded, however), not to lead troops or enter into active operations, but merely to hold together the well-disposed Soudan tribes against pillaging tribes, and to ensure harmony among the well-disposed. If there was any trouble in sending the officers he would not press for them, for he really believed he could manage without them. At all events, he wished it to be understood that if fighting occurred it was "the Soudini conservers of their property fighting the Soudini communists who desire to rob them, and that in the fighting, if it occurs (which is not certain, and which I hope may be avoided), there is no idea of asserting the Khedive's authority over the Soudan, but only of forming a firm Conservative Soudan Government, which I believe Her Majesty's Government has in view." Imbued with the desire that no bloodshed should occur, and that the wishes of the Khedive should be practically fulfilled minus resort to any kind of violence, Gordon had intimated to Mr. Clifford Lloyd that he might go to the Mahdi and not be heard of for two months, and that if nothing were heard of him, no alarm need be raised, as the Mahdi might keep him "a hostage for Zebehr." The suggested entry of Gordon into the lion's den was negatived at once, not on the ground of personal danger alone, but because of the strongest political objections.

Tuesday, February 12th, saw Gordon safe at Berber, 220 miles distant from Khartoum, still hopeful that his mission would be successful, where he at once set about placing affairs on a sounder footing, quieting alarms that

had been rampant, and inspiring everyone with his own calm confidence and sanguinity. Having restored order in the town, he appointed Hussein Bey Halifa, the Governor, Supreme Governor, with a Council of Notables, and on the 14th February—the day after the awful massacre of the Sinkat garrison in the Eastern Soudan—Gordon entered upon the last stage of his journey to Khartoum, where he arrived on the 19th February, exactly a month after leaving London, amid the most joyous and enthusiastic demonstrations of welcome on the part of the inhabitants, and to the intense gratification of the whole British race, who had followed him, in imagination, throughout his very dangerous, weary, and eventful journey, over sea, land, and river.

Immediately on his arrival at Khartoum, with that wonderful power of adapting himself to circumstances, however novel and trying, General Gordon summoned the officials—Mr. Power telegraphed—thus preparing the people for some salutary changes. He next held a levee at the Mudirieh, or Government house, the entire population, even the poorest Arab, being admitted. On his way between the Mudirieh and the Palace about a thousand persons pressed forward, kissing his hands and feet, calling him, “Sultan, Father, and Saviour of Kordofan.” General Gordon and Colonel Stewart at once opened offices in the Palace, giving to everyone with a grievance admission and a careful hearing. The Government books, recording from time immemorial the outstanding debts of the over-taxed people, were publicly burnt in front of the Palace. The kourbashes, whips, and implements for administering the bastinado from Government house were all placed upon the blazing pile. The evidence of debts and the emblems of oppression perished together. In the afternoon, General Gordon created a Council of the local Notables, all Arabs. Then he visited the hospital and arsenal. With Col. Stewart, Coetlogan Pasha (Commandant) and the English Consul (Mr. Power) he visited

the prison, and found it to be a dreadful den of misery. Two hundred wretches, loaded with chains, lay there. They were of all ages, boys and old men, some having never been tried, some having been found innocent, but forgotten for over six months, some arrested on suspicion and detained there more than three years, many merely prisoners of war, and one a woman, who had spent fifteen years in the prison for a crime committed when she was a girl. General Gordon at once began to demolish this bastille. All the prisoners were to be briefly examined, and, if advisable, set at liberty. Before it was dark scores of wretches had had their chains knocked off, and, by direction of General Gordon, Colonel Stewart continued the work into the night. The town was in a blaze of illuminations, the bazaar being hung with cloth and coloured lamps, and the private houses beautifully decorated: there was even a fine display of fireworks by the negro population, who indulged in great rejoicings till near midnight. The people expressed themselves as devoted to General Gordon, whose design was known to be to save the garrison and people and for ever leave the Soudan to the Soudini. By private addresses from Cairo the people learned that surprise was expressed at General Gordon's proclamation. At Khartoum the Europeans hailed it with delight, and agreed that it was the only means of saving the lives of themselves and the garrison. All the Soudini, it was known, thus early, were to stay in Khartoum; all the white troops were to go to Omdurman, on the other side of the White Nile, to be sent down the river in detachments, with their families, and the Europeans who wished to go. It was expected that the General's conciliatory measures would keep the road open, and also keep Khartoum quiet, till it had been entirely given up.

The Mahdi was proclaimed ruler of Kordofan, and the hope was that this would prevent his advance upon Khartoum. The slave trade was not to be interfered

with, but the Government were powerless to interfere with it and General Gordon was only making a virtue of a necessity in publishing a proclamation to this effect.

This proclamation on the retention of slavery read:—
“To all the inhabitants of Khartoum. Your tranquillity is the object of our hope. And as I know that you are sorrowful on account of slavery which existed among you and the stringent orders on the part of the Government for the abolition of it, and the punishment of all those who deal in them (the slaves), and the assurances given by the Government for its abolition, seizing upon and punishing those concerned in the trade; the punishment of all those who trade in slaves, according to Imperial decrees, on the firmans forwarded to you—all this is known to you. But henceforth no one will interfere with you in the matter, but everyone for himself may take a man into his service henceforth. Nobody will interfere with him, and he can do as he pleases in the matter, without interference on the part of anybody; and we have accordingly given this order. My compassion on you. (Signed), GORDON PASHA.” When the proclamation was first heard of in England, scarcely a soul could be induced to believe Gordon had issued any such notice. It was esteemed a canard, and on all doubt in the matter being removed the surprise was deep-rooted indeed. People could not be brought to understand that Gordon would countenance slavery; there were protestations from many quarters, and prophesies were heard that very serious results would follow the favouring of a system so utterly abhorred. Gordon’s Herculean efforts in the Soudan years before to repress slavery—his daring labours in the Equatorial provinces at the very seat of the evil to counteract the hellish purpose of the slave-owners and dealers—were remembered, and men were dumbfounded that he should now, as they believed, give the lie to his former doings, and encourage

what had long been a dark stain upon the Soudan and its government.

The fact was, Gordon had, perforce, made a virtue of necessity. He could see at once that tremendous as his influence was, he could not destroy thus early that which had eaten into the vitals of the system, and that nothing remained to him but to tolerate, until a more favourable season, that with which he could not cope. The Khedive, while surprised at the proclamation, opined, and rightly, that Gordon had found it impossible to do other than issue it, and Sir Evelyn Baring was credited with the conviction that it mattered little practically what Gordon proclaimed about slavery, unless England was ready to send an army into the Soudan and to keep it there. Decrees and laws on the subject were otherwise of no effect. In short, the admission was that Gordon had waived the whole question for a time in order to secure the other objects of his mission, and it was resolved that increased vigilance should be exercised elsewhere in watching the outlets of slavery and closing all accessible markets.

Intensified a thousand-fold was the amazement on General Gordon coupling with the proclamation on slave-holding (not slave-hunting, be it observed) a request to the British Government that Zebehr Pasha—who had been described as the King of the Slave Traders, with whom he was at blood-feud because of his defeating plans of his, and of his son Suleiman in the Soudan about the year 1878, while caught red-handed, it was said, trafficking in slaves—should be appointed Governor-General of the Soudan, the outcry being that Zebehr's election would complete any extreme plan favouring slavery, and that the terrible disease would permeate the Soudan even more largely than heretofore. It became pretty generally known, also, that Gordon had detested Zebehr most heartily. "Destroy the blood of Zebehr and Co.," he had written, "and the kidnapping of slaves is at an end. No man has been the cause of so much misery as Zebehr

Pasha Rahama, who walks at large at Cairo. He is the essence of the slave trade, and it is a disgrace he is not seized and imprisoned for life." At the same time he had long looked forward to the appointment of Zebehr. He knew that it meant the renewal of the slave trade and consequent suffering of the Central African tribes, but he believed it would work its own remedies—that slaves would, in the long run, destroy their own bondage. After asking for the appointment of a successor, who should have the promise of the moral support of Her Majesty's Government and "nothing more," General Gordon went on to say, "It may be argued that Her Majesty's Government would thus be giving nominal and moral support to a man who will rule over a slave State, but so is Afghanistan (where the Ameer was allowed a subsidy), and also Socotra. This nomination of my successor must, I think, be direct from Her Majesty's Government. As for the man, Her Majesty's Government should select one above all others, namely, Zebehr. He, alone, has the ability to rule the Soudan, and would be universally accepted by the Soudan. He should be made K.C.M.G. and given presents. The terms of nomination should be as follows:—1. Engagement not to go into Equatorial or Bahr Gazelle provinces, and which I should evacuate; 2. Engagement not to go to Darfur; 3. Engagement on payment of £200 annually to telegraph height of Nile to Cairo; 4. Engagement to remain at peace with Abyssinia; 5. Engagement not to levy duties beyond 4 per cent. on imports or exports. Of course, he will not have Suakim or Massowah. 6. Engagement not to pursue anyone who was engaged in suppressing his son's revolt; 7. Engagement to pay the pension, granted by the Egyptian Government to old employés. To the above may be added other clauses as may seem fit. P.S.—I think the decision of any Council of Notables for selection of candidates for the post of my successor would be useless. Zebehr's exile at Cairo for ten years, midst all the late events, and

his mixing with Europeans, must have had a great effect upon his character. Zebehr's nomination under the moral countenance of Her Majesty's Government would bring all merchants, European and others, back to the Soudan in a short time."

With the suggested appointment of Zebehr Sir Evelyn Baring and Colonel Stewart agreed. The former wrote: "I think the most advisable course would be to permit Zebehr to succeed Gordon with a certain sum of money to begin with, and £50,000 per annum for the first five years, to depend on his good behaviour. I believe that General Gordon is quite right when he says that Zebehr Pasha is the only possible man. I can suggest none other, and Nubar Pasha (the Egyptian Premier) is strongly in favour of him." It has since been no secret, we hear, that the Premier was in favour of the appointment, fully believing that General Gordon had his own good reasons for forwarding the proposal. Among recurring evidence in favour of the appointment of Zebehr was the opinion of a resident at Cairo, in an influential position, who observed that too much importance should not be attached to General Gordon's popularity, that it possibly existed among the masses, which was, however, worthless. Unless General Gordon could swallow Zebehr Pasha he would find himself powerless. The same person urged that General Gordon's life depended on the employment of Zebehr Pasha, and that the English must make up their minds to sacrifice their prejudice or sacrifice Gordon. They had put him in the lion's mouth and he was shrewd enough to see the only way out of it. Gordon was too brave to tell them that the refusal of Zebehr was his death-warrant—at least, unless they sent an army to himself. Weighty words these, in the light of more recent events. Zebehr himself exclaimed that Gordon was in the greatest jeopardy, yet if the Government would act quickly, he would be responsible with his own life for bringing him safely back to Cairo. With regard to the

assertion that, he (Zebehr) was a slave-dealer, he called God and man to witness that it was false. If the Government could find a man, woman, or child throughout the whole upper country of Egypt who could say that he sold a human being he would submit to any punishment! He was, he said, loved like a father there.

General Gordon, on the same subject, is known to have said: "Her Majesty's Government, with the full consent of the Khedive, has decided to separate the Soudan from Egypt. And both Governments having sent me to carry out the evacuation of the Soudan and to restore native government, I ask you what your answer would have been to the people of the Soudan when they ask by the treaty, which I have read, that the slaves can be liberated in 1889. I answered that the treaty would not hold good, so far as I am concerned; and that I should not interfere with slave-holding. As to the exact words of the proclamation, when translated from the Arabic, I cannot speak, for I merely dictated the sense of it. I would add that I have ever considered the liberation of the slaves without compensation, or without some gradual registration system, as robbery; and I am supported in this view by the action of Parliament in 1833, when it granted twenty millions sterling to liberate the West Indian slaves. Further, I say you will never carry out the treaty of 1877 in Egypt, by which the slaves are to be liberated in 1889. Had I said I would allow slave-hunting then you might have complained. What I said was *in re* slave-holding. As for slave-hunting, rest assured that I have not forgotten it; and, God willing, I will take such measures as will prevent it. I wonder if you are aware of the fact that when I was Governor-General here at Khartoum I never interfered with slave-holding; and that, in fact, till 1889, could do so even under the old regime. All my work was against slave-hunting. So much did I regard the existing slaves as property that I have often bought individuals myself and given them liberty!"

The Government did not decide hastily in the matter ; indeed, for a time the report was not bruited abroad that Gordon had urged Zebehr's appointment as Governor-General of the Soudan—it was forgotten that Gordon's election was meant to be a temporary one—while he brought away the garrisons before fulfilling his obligations to the King of the Belgians to proceed on his mission to the Congo region. The British Foreign Secretary wrote in the first place to Sir Evelyn Baring, at Cairo, suggesting that if Gordon's application were complied with Zebehr might ally himself with the Mahdi, that it was probable he would encourage the slave trade, and that Gordon's life would be endangered. As to the latter point it may be stated, that General Gordon's brother is reported to have said, that the hero's life would not be worth a moment's purchase once Zebehr was in Khartoum, because of the deadly hatred he was supposed to have borne him. But Sir Evelyn Baring replied again that nothing would be gained by postponing the appointment ; on the contrary, delay would be injurious. Were we to follow this matter of Gordon's proposed appointment of Zebehr—to refuse which, he said, would occasion, when he left, anarchy throughout the country, another word for “misfortune and inhumanity”—we should be advancing too quickly in the recital of events. We must, therefore, allow the question to remain in abeyance for the nonce with the British Ministry, while we treat on circumstances which induced Gordon to renew his application. By adopting this course we shall the more clearly take in the whole situation, and create a better understanding as to the surroundings in which Gordon and the inhabitants of Khartoum became enveloped.

CHAPTER XVI.

GORDON'S ACTS OF MERCY AND OF GRACE—"HOLDING THE BALANCE EVEN"—CLEARING THE AUGEAN STABLE—THE GOVERNOR SANGUINE—ACTIVITY OF THE MAHDI'S AGENTS—PROPOSAL TO "SMASH" THE MAHDI—WARNINGS TO THE SOUDINI—EVACUATION POSSIBLE—DESPATCH TO THE FALSE PROPHET—INDIGNANT REPLY OF MOHAMMED AHMED—GORDON INVITED TO BECOME A DERVISH—COLONEL STEWART'S RECONNAISSANCE—FAILURE OF GORDON'S MISSION—KHARTOUM SURROUNDED—"CAUGHT AT KHARTOUM"—HOPING AGAINST HOPE—NO QUARREL WITH ZEBEHR—NO CHANCE FOR THE GARRISONS—GLOOMY FOREBODINGS.

THE telegraphic despatch from General Gordon advising the immediate appointment of Zebehr Pasha as his successor at Khartoum, whenever the condition of affairs should warrant him vacating his office, was wired on the day he passed through the gates of the doomed city, and at the time he created such a sensation by releasing prisoners unjustly incarcerated, and by burning the documents relating to what had, practically, kept the inhabitants in bondage. To confirm the impression that his mission was one of purest mercy, General Gordon followed his wonderful initiatory acts at Khartoum by establishing boxes into which the people were to deposit their petitions and complaints. These were left in plenty.

The aggrieved individuals were protected before those who would still have ground them down, and not a petition was there, even from the poorest, which did not receive the attention it deserved. Indeed, Gordon's advent to Khartoum reads like some wonderful story from the "Arabian Nights." He was a veritable deliverer and friend, striking off the chains of the oppressed, relieving the sufferings of all who claimed his aid, and astounding everyone by his ubiquity, his grace, his singular influence, and the magic spell of his grand courage, brilliant genius, and beneficent presence. And in saving the wretched he punished the wrong-doer, bestowed upon the cowardly their just deserts, held "the balance even" wherever he appeared and whenever he sat to administer the law. Never was so divinely inspired a coming for well-nigh two thousand years; never, we imagine, will that glorious concentration of virtues be displayed again while the earth remaineth!

At Khartoum the minor authorities had been accustomed to demand backsheesh, or tolls, from all the people entering the one gate of the city which was left open, but Gordon threw back two more gates, prohibited the custom, supplementing these, and the wonderful succession of the first measures instituted by him, in proclaiming a free market. A sheikh was carried into his presence with his feet dreadfully mutilated. Six weeks before, the late Vice-Governor had bastinadoed the old man—said Mr. Power, from whose telegrams to the *Times* these particulars are gleaned with regard to what transpired in and around Khartoum—till the sinews of his feet were exposed. On hearing the case Gordon telegraphed to Cairo that the fellow was to have £50 of his pay stopped for the benefit of the sheikh. If the official objected to this deduction he was to be returned for trial.

After attending to the crying needs of the poor and heavily oppressed, "giving them more than they had ex-

pected from the Mahdi himself," creating a Council of Notables, clearing away the dross from official departments, thrashing the husks from the wheat, transforming the Augean stable, the Governor began the arduous task of seeing to the evacuation of the city, attending first to the weak, and the utterly helpless. The fellah^{teen} troops he ordered back to Cairo, making arrangements for the Bashi-Bazouks to follow and for Khartoum being held by Soudini troops. He was perfectly confident that he would accomplish the pacification of the Soudan without firing a shot. To Colonel Coetlogan, who was about to leave Khartoum, after fulfilling his duties admirably as Commandant, he addressed himself the day but one after his (Gordon's) arrival: "My belief is that there is not the least chance of any danger being incurred by Khartoum, which I consider as safe as Cairo. Therefore, your service here in a military capacity would be wasted. I consider this place was in imminent danger, not from an external enemy, but from the people in the town, who, bullied by the effete government of Hussein Pasha Cheri (the late Vice-Governor) became favourable to the El Obeid (the Mahdist's) people. Rest assured you leave this place as safe as Kensington Park." The General gave the highest praise to Colonel Coetlogan for all he had done for the Soudan, and thanked him in his own name and that of the people.

For many days Gordon devoted some time to sending off telegrams to the British Government, keeping them *au fait* with the situation at Khartoum, and a week after his arrival he despatched the following, which, above all others telegraphed at this period, has become really historical:—"February 27th, Mahdi's agents active in all directions. No chance of Mahdi's advance personally from El Obeid. You must remember that when evacuation is carried out, Mahdi will come down here, and, by agents, will not let Egypt be quiet. Of course, my duty is evacuation, and the best I can for establishing a quiet

government. The first I hope to accomplish. The second is a more difficult task, and concerns Egypt more than me. *If Egypt is to be quiet, Mahdi must be smashed up.* Mahdi is most unpopular, and with care and time could be smashed. Remember that once Khartoum belongs to the Mahdi, the task will be far more difficult; yet you will, for safety of Egypt, execute it. If you decide on smashing Mahdi, then send up another £100,000 and send up 200 Indian troops to Wady Halfa, and send officer up to Dongola, under pretence to look out quarters for troops. Leave Suakim and Massowah alone, and report that evacuation is possible, but you will feel effect in Egypt, and will be forced to enter into a far more serious affair in order to guard Egypt. At present, it would be comparatively easy to destroy Mahdi."

Although Gordon spoke so hopefully of being able to "smash" the Mahdi, there are not wanting indications that he was quite aware of the forces that were slowly but surely raising their hydra-like heads against him, for on the very day on which he sent off this ever-to-be-remembered despatch he deemed it necessary to warn the people that they would be sorely punished if they joined the rebellion, adding that British troops were on the march, and would, in a few days, be at Khartoum. He could not have expected them, of course, for the city was not invested; then he telegraphed: "Evacuation of the Soudan is impossible until the Government asserts its authority, and I mean by evacuation the removal of all Egyptian employés who form the machinery of government, and not the departure of sick, &c., who may be considered to have gone from here. Should you wish to intervene, send 200 British troops to Wady Halfa, and then open up Suakim-Berber road by India Moslem troops. This will cause an immediate collapse of the revolt. If you decide against this you will probably have to decide between Zebehr and the Mahdi."

To the False Prophet, to whom it is known he offered

Kordofan, Gordon despatched the following :—" I salute you. Let us have the road open between us. Give us your prisoners. I make you Sultan of West Darfur. I remit half the taxes of the Soudan. I allow the slave trade to be carried on. Why should you fight? If you wish to fight, I am ready. Wait ten months. I will then either declare war against you or leave the Soudan to you with fixed boundaries." It has often been said that the character of the Mahdi would not allow him to treat, nor to communicate with those he esteems as infidels, but here is what Gordon says of the answer :—" March 22nd, 1884. The man who took my letter to the Mahdi came back to-day. He says Mahdi received the letter; he assembled his councillors, and discussed the matter for ten days, then wrote an answer and tore it up. He then talked over the matter for ten days more, and wrote another letter, which he tore up; after another three days he wrote an answer, and sent it by two of his men, who are now outside the town. The Mahdi's messengers have now come in with the letter, which proposes that I should become Mussulman. He says he looks after the European prisoners; he asserts his claim to be Mahdi, so he is not likely to stop short at Khartoum, but will push his pretensions beyond that. I answered that I had received his letters, styled him Sheikh Mohammed Ahmed—thus cancelling his Sultanship—and said there was an end of negotiations. Mahdi sent me dervish's dress, which I sent back. He returned the dress I sent him. The demeanour of Mahdi's men was exceedingly cheeky. When they pertinaciously kept putting the bundle containing the dervish's dress before me I did not know what it contained, and getting angry, I threw it across the room; it was only after they had left that my clerk, who gave it back to them, told me it was a filthy patched dervish's coat. They refused to disarm as they entered my presence, and kept their hands upon their swords. I could not help thinking that certainly no Mussulman

would have let them go again, and so, at any rate, my being Christian was relied on by them for safety." Subsequent to this the Mahdi returned the suit Gordon had sent him, forwarding him a suit of his own uniform. Nothing remained but fighting.

Certain it is that whatever plans the Mahdi intended to carry into effect as against Gordon and Khartoum, the British General did his utmost in the direction of pacification. Not only did he take steps to proclaim his mission of peace at Khartoum, but he sent copies of the proclamation out to tribes for scores of miles round. More than this, on the 3rd March Col. Stewart returned from a reconnaissance along the White Nile, on whose shores he found the influences of the insurrection were disseminated, his steamer having been pursued along the banks by men fully armed, and demonstrating in favour of the Pretender. Proclamations of good-will were issued by him on behalf of Gordon, but they were jeered at, and appearances altogether went to show that south of Khartoum the rebellion had spread in every quarter. Nay, in less than a week from the date on which Colonel Stewart came back to Gordon at Khartoum after ineffectually endeavouring to counteract the growth of the revolt, Gordon's mission had failed.

Khartoum was surrounded ! By the banks of the Blue Nile on the south-east, along each side of the Blue Nile on the south-west, across the Senaar country between the two tributaries meeting at Khartoum and joining the rolling Nile, round by the desert still further to the west, had swept the rushing tide of the revolt of fanatical Arabs. The legions of the Mahdi had crossed also west by north, and east by north of the devoted city—they had joined hands with the tribes on the right and left banks of the Nile between Shendy, half-way from Khartoum to Berber, and had cut off communication—save telegraphic, and this failed shortly afterwards—with the civilised world, so that the small river steamers by which Gordon

by almost superhuman exertion had sent down over two thousand men, women, and children to places of refuge could no longer ply in their humane voyages. The rebels threatened, too, the nearest of the garrisons to Khartoum itself, and unless a violent effort were begun to extricate them and bring them within the walls of Khartoum—which, after all, were only of mud, though enclosing a form endowed with an iron will and divinely inspired soul—they would fall and be counted with the garrisons that had felt to the bitterest degree the shock of the Mahdi's hordes.

In this short time, then, was Gordon a prisoner in the very city which he had fondly hoped would be the base of his labours for relieving the garrisons, still defying the rebels, and from which he was to proclaim that decision of the Egyptian Government giving the Soudan to the Soudini, while their conquerors of years gone by watched from the new frontier well-nigh two hundred miles further north the republic or monarchy—whichever it pleased the people to set up—that should be established when the desert territory had been vacated. Yes! self-denying as had been the work of Gordon, heroic as was his spirit, chivalrous as was his virtuous soul, powerful, morally and practically, as had been his sway, beneficent as were his inclinations, peaceful as was his mission, the Mahdi was a greater power than he. The case had been one of Gordon *versus* Mahdi, and the latter had won—victorious so far that Gordon was as "a dead man out of mind" except in Khartoum city. But what a brilliant, radiant star was he within those walls!

On the 3rd of March Gordon was convinced that he would be caught at Khartoum. The hero wrote:—"I maintain firmly the policy of eventual evacuation, but I tell you plainly it is impossible to get the Cairo employé's out of Khartoum unless the Government helps in the way I told you. They refuse Zebehr, and are quite right (may be) to do so, but it was the only chance. It is scarcely

worth while saying more on the subject. I will do my best to carry out my instructions, but I feel the conviction I shall be caught at Khartoum." He felt that if all was not lost, the ground was slipping from under his feet. He was resting upon shifting sand, he had no stable foundation to preserve him—he, who had boldly confronted death, daily, hourly, years before, was braving it now—unflinchingly, nobly, as became a soldier of the Cross, of his Queen and country—"not for myself," as he had said in those terrible days amid the wilds of the forbidding Soudan when hunting the slave-dealers, "but for these poor, wretched, sickly Soudini lambs."

Yet Gordon had not relinquished hope. He trusted still in the Government whose Envoy he was—surely they would not forsake him in his hour of misfortune, in his adversity, in his day of sore trial?

And so he renews his request for Zebehr Pasha. "I see the impossibility of the immediate withdrawal of all Egyptian employés," he says—and be it noted all his care is for others, aliens, not blood of his blood—"and the remedy I propose is to send up Zebehr as my successor, who would receive for a time a subsidy from the Egyptian Government, in order to enable him to maintain an armed force. As to Egyptian employés, I mean that I appoint men of Soudan to places which they do not care to accept for fear of compromising themselves with Mahdi, and that is my difficulty, which arises from haziness of the future. This would be all over if Zebehr were here. The combination at Khartoum of Zebehr and myself is an absolute necessity for success. My conviction is that there is not the slightest fear of our quarrelling, for Zebehr would know that the subsidy depended on my safety. To do any good, we must be together, and that without delay." Again Gordon urged the British Government not to delay, his personal weakness being that he was "foreign, Christian, and peaceful," and it was only by sending Zebehr that prejudice could be removed. "Unless Zebehr

is sent there," wrote Colonel Stewart, "I see little probability of the policy of evacuation, which General Gordon and I approve of, being carried out. Every day we remain finds us to incur responsibilities towards the people which it is impossible for us to overlook." A few days before these messages were received at home, Sir Evelyn Baring telegraphed to Lord Granville (that is to say on February 28th), from Cairo: "Two alternative courses may be adopted. One is to evacuate the Soudan entirely, and to make no attempt to establish any settled Government there before leaving; the other is to make every effort of which the present circumstances permit to set up some settled form of government, to replace the former Egyptian administration. General Gordon is evidently in favour of the latter of these courses, and I entirely agree with him. The attempt, it is true, may not be successful, but I am strongly of opinion it should be made. From every point of view, whether political, military, or financial, it will be a most serious matter if complete anarchy is allowed to reign south of Wady Halfa. And this anarchy will inevitably ensue on General Gordon's departure, unless some measures are adopted beforehand to prevent it. . . . I think Gordon should have full liberty of action to do what seems best to the British and Egyptian Governments."

At this time, telegraphed Gordon, again, two-thirds of the people were terrorised over by one-third, excited by emissaries of the Mahdi. Instead of supporting the two-thirds, his undisguised intention was to get Egyptian employes out of the Soudan. To this the two-thirds strongly objected, because it left them impotent. There remained, then, 1,400 fellahyteen soldiers. Supposing he sent these down to Berber, in a few days the town would send to the Mahdi its submission, and all the machinery of Government would be caught. It would not be for love of the Mahdi, but because they were hopeless. On the 2nd March Gordon stated that he had no option

about staying at Khartoum, it had passed out of his hands, and as to sending a larger force than 200, he did not think it necessary to Wady Halfa. It was not the number, but the prestige which he needed; he was sure the revolt would collapse if he could say he had British troops at his back. "The military authorities," said Sir E. Baring, and he agreed with them, "did not think it desirable to send 200 British troops to Wady Halfa; accordingly none were sent."

Neither was Zebehr Pasha despatched to Khartoum. The British Consul-General at Cairo (Sir E. Baring) and the Egyptian Prime Minister (Nubar Pasha) were in favour of Zebehr, but the British Cabinet was not; and, to use Lord Granville's words, "British public opinion would not stand Zebehr," the Opposition in Parliament were against him likewise, the Anti-Slavery Society petitioned, and it must be repeated that from every side came a cry against the appointment of Zebehr, so abhorrent was slavery and its progenitors to the public taste.

So Gordon was informed by telegraph on the 5th March that the British Government absolutely refused to send Zebehr to him. Gordon's reply is characterised by such candour, and such a defence, and describes the situation in and around Khartoum so admirably, that we should be remiss did we not reproduce the message: "Khartoum, March 8th, 1884.—The sending of Zebehr means the extrication of the Cairo employés from Khartoum, and the garrisons from Senaar and Kassala. I can see no possible way to do so except through him, who, being a native of the country, can rally the well-affected round him, as they know he will make his home here. I do not think that the giving a subsidy to Zebehr for some two years would be in contradiction to the policy of entire evacuation. It would be nothing more than giving him a lump sum in two instalments under the conditions I have already written.

"As for slave-holding, even had we held the Soudan,

we could never have interfered with it. I have already said that the treaty of 1877 was an impossible one; therefore, on that head, Zebehr's appointment would make no difference whatever. As for slave-hunting, the evacuation of the Bahr Gazelle and Equatorial provinces would entirely prevent it. Should Zebehr attempt, after his two years' subsidy was paid him, to take those districts, we could put pressure on him at Suakim, which will remain in our hands. I feel sure that Zebehr will be so occupied with the Soudan proper, and with consolidating his position, that he will not have time to devote to those provinces.

"As for the security of Egypt, Zebehr's stay in Cairo has taught him our power, and he would never dream of doing anything against Egypt. He would rather seek its closest alliance, for he is a great trader. As to progress made in extrication of garrisons, all I have done is to send down from Khartoum all the sick men, women, and children of those killed in Kordofan. Senaar, I heard to-day, is quite safe and quiet. Kassala will hold out without difficulty after Graham's victory, but the road there is blocked, as also is the road to Senaar. It is quite impossible to get the roads open to Kassala and Senaar, or to send down the white troops, unless Zebehr comes up. He will change the whole state of affairs. As for the Equatorial and Bahr Gazelle provinces they are all right; but I cannot evacuate them till the Nile rises, in about two months. Dongola and Berber are quiet; but I fear for the road between Berber and Khartoum, where the friends of the Mahdi are very active. A body of rebels on the Blue Nile are blockading a force of 1,000 men, who have, however, plenty of food; till the Nile rises I cannot relieve them. Darfur, so far as I can understand, is all right, and the restored Sultan should be now working up the tribes to acknowledge him.

"It is impossible to find any other man but Zebehr for governing Khartoum. No one has his power. Hussein

Pasha Khaleefa has only power at Dongola and Berber. If you do not send Zebehr you have no chance of getting the garrisons away; this is a heavy argument in favour of sending him. There is no possibility of dividing the country between Zebehr and other chiefs; none of the latter could stand for a day against the Mahdi's agents, and Hussein Pasha Khaleefa would also fall. The chiefs will not collect here, for the loyal are defending their lands against the disloyal. There is not the least chance of Zebehr making common cause with the Mahdi. Zebehr here would be far more powerful than the Mahdi, and he would make short work of the Mahdi. The Mahdi's power is that of a Pope, Zebehr's will be that of a Sultan. They could never combine. Zebehr is fifty times the Mahdi's match. He is also of good family, well known, and fitted to be Sultan; the Mahdi, in all these respects, is the exact opposite, besides being a fanatic. I daresay Zebehr, who hates the tribes, did stir up the fires of revolt, in hopes that he would be sent to quell it. It is the irony of fate that he will get his wish if he is sent up."

On the 9th March, the day following that which saw the despatch of the communication just given from Khartoum, Sir E. Baring telegraphed to Lord Granville, on Gordon's request, for Zebehr: "I think that the policy of sending Zebehr Pasha to Khartoum and giving him a subsidy is in harmony with the policy of evacuation. It is in principle the same policy as that adopted by the Government of India towards Afghanistan and the tribes on the north-west frontier. I have always contemplated making some arrangements for the future government of the Soudan, as will be seen from my despatch of the 23rd December, 1883, in which I said that it would be necessary to send an English officer of high authority to Khartoum with full powers to withdraw all garrisons of the Soudan and make the best arrangements possible for the future government of the country. As regards slavery, it may certainly

receive a stimulus from the abandonment of the Soudan by Egypt, but the despatch of Zebehr Pasha to Khartoum will not affect the question in one way or another. No middle course is possible as far as the Soudan is concerned. We must either virtually annex the country, which is out of the question, or we must accept the inevitable consequences of abandonment. Your lordship will see what General Gordon says about the question of the security of Egypt. I believe that Zebehr Pasha may be made a bulwark against the approach of the Mahdi. Of course there is a risk that he will constitute a danger to Egypt, but this risk is, I think, a small one, and it is in any case preferable to incur it rather than face the certain disadvantages of withdrawing, without making any provision for the future government of the country, which would thus be sure to fall under the power of the Mahdi."

CHAPTER XVII.

WHY THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT COMMISSION ZEBEHR—
GORDON STILL APPEALS FOR ZEBEHR—RELIEF OF
HALFIYEH—HOSTILITIES BEGUN—IMPOSING ARRAY
OF REBELS—CAPTURE BY THE ARABS—REFUGEES AT
KHARTOUM—REJOICINGS IN THE CITY—DEFEAT OF
GORDON'S SOLDIERS—TREACHERY IN THE CAMP—EX-
CITING NARRATIVE—REGRETS—TWO PASHAS COURT-
MARTIALLED AND SHOT—FAITH IN GORDON UNABATED
—PROOFS OF CONFIDENCE—GRATIFYING EVENTS.

As we have seen, the British Minister at Cairo practically coincided with the view of General Gordon that Zebehr should be sent on to Khartoum as his successor in spite of the connection Zebehr had had with slave-dealing years before. He believed with Gordon that Zebehr would be a bulwark against the approach of the Mahdi, and that although there was a small risk in commissioning him, the course was the best under the circumstances. To this approval of Gordon's scheme, Lord Granville replied in a despatch to our Cairo representative, dated the 28th March, 1884. This despatch is most important as embodying in full the reasons of the Government for not complying with our Khartoum envoy's request for Zebehr, and may be accepted as the manifesto of Mr. Gladstone's Ministry for refusing absolutely to send Zebehr.

Lord Granville explained : " If reliance could safely have

been placed upon Zebehr to serve loyally with General Gordon, to act in a friendly manner towards Egypt, and to abstain from encouraging the slave trade, the course proposed was undoubtedly the best which could have been taken under the circumstances; but upon this most vital point General Gordon's assurances failed to convince Her Majesty's Government. They felt the strongest desire to comply with his wishes, but they were bound, at the same time, to exercise their own deliberate judgment upon a proposal the adoption of which might produce such serious consequences.

"They could not satisfy themselves of the probability that the establishment of Zebehr's authority would be a security to Egypt; on the contrary, his antecedents, and the opinions expressed only a few weeks ago by General Gordon and yourself as to his character and disposition, led them to the conclusion that it would probably constitute a serious danger to Egypt. There seemed to Her Majesty's Government to be considerable risk that Zebehr might join with the Mahdi, or if he fought and destroyed him, that he would then turn against Egypt. The existence of an outbreak of Mussulman fanaticism was undoubted; but the Mahdi had not shown any personal qualifications which threatened to convert it into a military power and organization. To have let loose in the Soudan a Mussulman of undoubted ability and ambition, possessed of great military skill, and with a grievance against the Egyptian Government, appeared to Her Majesty's Government to be so perilous a course that they were unable to accept the responsibility of adopting it.

"They were unable to share General Gordon's confidence that Zebehr's blood feud with him involved no serious danger, and they felt that the opinion originally expressed by General Gordon, by the Council at Cairo, and by yourself, was more likely to be correct than the subsequent one. The chivalrous character of General Gordon appeared

to be likely to lead him into the generous error of trusting too much to the loyalty of a man whose interests and feelings were hostile to him.

“ Besides these considerations affecting the interests of Egypt and the safety of General Gordon, Her Majesty’s Government had further to consider how far it was probable that his authority might be exercised to renew the slave-hunting raids for which he was notorious.

“ The temptation to embark in such lucrative transactions would be great to himself, and there would be the additional risk that, having to rely on the support of his former friends and dependents, the slave-hunters, he would be obliged to purchase their support by connivance at their nefarious practices.

“ Her Majesty’s Government understand the reasons which compelled General Gordon to announce that the property in slaves in the Soudan would be recognised; but this is a very different thing from using the authority of Great Britain to establish a notorious slave-hunter as ruler over that country. General Gordon, indeed, proposed that the Bahr-el-Gazelle and Equatorial provinces should be excluded from Zebehr’s rule, but England would have possessed no power to secure his adherence to such a stipulation. These were the considerations which led Her Majesty’s Government to address to you the instructions of the 13th inst.

“ Since that time General Gordon’s apprehension that the tribes would rise between Khartoum and Berber has been realized, and the communication between those places has been interrupted. On the other hand, the power of Osman Digna, apparently the most dangerous leader of the fanatical movement, has received a serious check, if it has not been altogether destroyed, by the victories of Sir Gerald Graham, which must produce a sensible effect on all the tribes of the Eastern Soudan. General Gordon, so far as is known, is not in any immediate danger in Khartoum; and Her Majesty’s Government are glad to

learn from a communication addressed to you by General Gordon that he is ready to proceed with his task, with or without the assistance of Zebehr.

“The observations which I have made in this despatch are not intended to imply the slightest blame upon the manner in which you have discharged the arduous and responsible task of advising Her Majesty’s Government under circumstances of extraordinary difficulty. It was your obvious duty to communicate your opinions to them in the plainest manner. You have discharged that duty faithfully and well. Her Majesty’s Government are deeply sensible of the courage, patriotism, self-sacrifice, and devotion to duty which actuate General Gordon. They have felt no disposition to criticise in any narrow spirit the suggestions which, with his characteristic frankness, he has made from day to day as to the most effectual way of meeting difficulties as they presented themselves to him. But Her Majesty’s Government had to decide upon those suggestions to the best of their ability. They are fully sensible of the difficulty of the task, and, while they have been unable to agree with General Gordon and yourself upon this particular question, they are satisfied that the interests of Egypt and of Great Britain could not be intrusted to abler hands.”

Endeavouring by every argument he could summon in support of his case for the despatch of Zebehr, General Gordon had, meanwhile, to reckon with the clouds that were fast closing around Khartoum. “Goodwill” was yet his watchword, but the least scintilla of hope having eventually vanished, he began to institute measures for relieving the garrison nearest Khartoum by force of arms, if necessary. This was the garrison of Halfiyeh, some miles to the north of the city. A few days prior to the 13th March, communication with the men (800) in Halfiyeh had been partially unrestricted, but now that the surging tide of wild, reckless fanaticism had hemmed Khartoum in, Gordon’s estimate was that Halfiyeh must

soon fall unless succour was sent to the place. Accordingly, he settled on his dispositions for relieving the garrison. He decided that, as the rebels around the town numbered some 4,000, he would attack on three sides—one from that of Khartoum, one from that of the beleaguered garrison, and one from armed steamers. The rebels had entrenched themselves along the river bank, being thus enabled to fire with impunity upon passing steamers. Provided that no influence were brought to bear from without, he reasoned, the loss of the action would not involve immediate danger to Khartoum; and, he proceeded, the only justification for assuming the offensive was derived from the law of self-defence, and his duty to the men beleaguered in Halfiyeh. But for this, it was questionable whether he ought, he cogitated, to shoot down those whose reason for rebellion was fidelity to the only person whom they could see as their coming Governor in the immediate future, with the wish to preserve their possessions, the security of which could not be guaranteed by the existing provisional Government. He had information from Kassala that the garrison was holding out strongly, and that it might even assume the offensive. There was also a report that the Sheikh Busecu, who was besieging Sala Bey, had been poisoned. The town was safe, and the people were actually volunteering for the Government.

Gordon's preparations for attack were, however, disturbed in a manner which reduced him to the position of resisting an attack from the enemy, and by which the Mahdists were the first to fire shots in anger in the neighbourhood of Khartoum.

The same evening that he had been completing his dispositions for relieving the Halfiyeh garrison by the stern arbitrament of war, that is to say, on the 13th March, about 3,000 rebels, horse and foot, were drawn up under arms, with banners waving, on the right bank of the Nile, opposite to the palace. They were observed till night fell, and then their watch-fires were seen in the darkness. At

three o'clock next morning heavy rifle-firing was heard, which continued till day-break, when about 6,000 rebels returned from the direction of the river, and drew up in four ranks, extending a long distance. Later on in the day they commenced making huts and putting up tents, evidently determined to hold the position for some time. It transpired that, by some unaccountable negligence, 300 of the black troops had been left on the Nile below, where they had been sent to collect firewood. These were cut off by the advance of the Arabs, and they attempted to get to Khartoum at night by means of boats. When passing Halfiyeh they were seen by the Mahdists, who opened fire, killing 100! In consequence of some further disgraceful negligence—not on the part of Gordon—the steamers that should have gone to their rescue did not get under weigh for six hours after the event. This sad loss, with the intelligence brought to him later that some Shaggiahs, who had been blockaded at Halfiyeh, had gone over to the rebels, combined with the vast accumulation of the latter on the banks of the Nile, decided poor Gordon to restrict himself to the defence of Khartoum, and not to risk any outside expedition further than might be necessary to keep the environs clear.

One rift there was in the darkened sky, shutting the three Britons, Gordon, Stewart, Power, and the others in Khartoum, from a world that might not have been the same as that in which they moved, and it was this: Later on, three armed steamers sent towards Halfiyeh returned, having taken the three boats captured by the rebels on the previous night, and five others. The captains reported that the garrison of Halfiyeh was faithful, and still holding out. The relief expedition—for Gordon had resolved not to abandon the garrison so near to him—started down the river on the morning of the 15th. The steamers were defended with boiler-plates, and carried mountain guns, protected by wooden mantlets. The troops were concealed in the holds and in large iron barges, in order to protect

them from the intrenched Arab marksmen on the banks, who, owing to the lowness of the Nile, commanded the river. In the evening, amidst the greatest rejoicings known there for many years, the expedition returned to Khartoum, having been completely successful. By the ingenuity, the forethought, and the admirable preliminaries of Gordon, they had raised the siege, saved the 800 soldiers who composed the garrison, with the loss of two men, capturing 70 camels, 18 horses, and a number of arms and cattle. There was a great demonstration by the townspeople in honour of Gordon; congratulations and thanks were showered upon him, "laying" for a period all too brief the grim phantom he must have observed, and whispering hope even in the prevailing darkness.

1884 Short-lived, indeed, was that gleam of light. Telegraphing on March 16th, Mr. Power told the story of a rebel success. The previous day's victory had, he said, been followed by a rather serious reverse. That morning (the 16th) it was arranged to attack the rebels drawn up opposite the palace on the other side of the Blue Nile. The rebel lines, about two miles long, about eight distant, and parallel to the Blue Nile, stretched from Halfiyeh to some wooded sandhills. At an early hour, the troops, about 2,000 strong, marched. The Bashi-Bazouks and Egyptian regulars were in a long line facing the enemy, and also parallel to the Blue Nile. On the left flank was a small square of regular Soudan troops, with one field gun. On the right front flank was a handful of mounted troops. As the men of the garrison drew near the rebels, the latter began to file away to the right of the line, disappearing behind the sandhills. The enemy's rear was covered by about 60 Arabs, mounted on horses and camels. The line still advanced, and the artillery fired two shells at the retiring rebels. The horsemen having entered the woods at the foot of the sandhills, it was noticed with astonishment that five principal officers of

the Egyptian force, who had been riding a little ahead, dashed back, breaking through their own ranks.

At that moment the rebel cavalry shot out at full gallop from behind the sandhills on the right. Their appearance was the signal for a disgraceful *sauve qui peut* on the part of the men of the garrison, who broke up and rushed back without firing a shot. The 60 horsemen, who were only armed with lances and swords, dashed about, cutting down the flying men. One Arab lancer killed seven Egyptians in as many minutes. He then jumped off his horse to secure a rifle and ammunition, when a mounted Bashi-Bazouk officer cut him down. The rebel infantry now appeared, and rushed about in all directions, hacking at the men disabled by the cavalry charge. The slaughter continued for nearly two miles, Gordon's men not stopping to fire a shot. Then the Arabs halted, and an officer rallied some of the troops, and they commenced a dropping but harmless fire at the enemy, who seemed content not to advance, but treated them with the greatest contempt, some riding quietly on camels in front of the muzzles. This continued till midday, some of the men dropping from stray bullets fired by the Arabs. The rebels then drew off to their old position, carrying a lot of rifles and cartridges and one mountain piece. The irregulars, instead of returning into camp, coolly adjourned to a neighbouring friendly village opposite the palace. When they had completely looted this and killed some of the inhabitants, they strolled into camp.

"I, who had seen every incident of the battle from the palace roof," continued Mr. Power, "crossed the river to our fort opposite. Here was a fearful scene of confusion. Men of the Egyptian regulars and Bashi-Bazouks were crying out that their two generals had betrayed them. These two worthies were among the five horsemen whom I saw break through their own lines, and were now hidden in a house, afraid to go out lest they should be murdered by their own soldiers. There is no lack of evidence that

when they galloped back Said Pasha rode towards a gun and slashed through the brain the sergeant in charge, who was in the act of laying the gun. At the same time Hassan Pasha cut down two artillerymen. I then found that up to that hour, seven hours after the battle, no doctors had seen the wounded. I found them lying scattered through the tents bathed in blood, and each man with three or four wounds—all from the sword or spear. There were only about 20 wounded, as the Arabs gave no quarter, and only left the wounded when they believed them to be dead. I doubt whether any will survive. Colonel Stewart got them on board a steamer, and transferred them to the hospital. On going back to the camp I met the army surgeon in charge, who coolly informed me that there were no wounded, and was very reluctant to go to the hospital when I told him that there were.

“As I write, parties of Bashi-Bazouks are carrying the bodies of friends who fell near the camp. Looking from the windows here in the palace, I can see the moonlit plain dotted with white marks in all directions; each mark represents the body of some poor wretch who never had the ideas, the hopes, or the courage of a soldier, and whose only instinct was retreat. All the bodies brought into camp bear the first inflicted wound on the back. Our loss is about 200 killed; the enemy's loss has not exceeded four. From this will be clearly seen the worthlessness of the soldiers now left in Khartoum with which the Government seems to think General Gordon can work wonders. Officers and men alike are useless as soldiers. To-day they had every advantage on their side, yet 60 horsemen without firearms signally defeated 2,000 armed with the best European weapons—Remingtons, bayonets, and revolvers. So terrified were the soldiers during the retreat, that until the Arabs ceased slaying not a shot was fired nor saw I a bayonet fixed during the day. It may be asked why General Gordon made a sortie after the

examples of the utter worthlessness of the troops afforded by the late war. For the last three weeks the cry of the whole town, troops, and Bashi-Bazouks, was to be allowed to meet the enemy. This demand was intensified by the victory of the 15th, and the general opinion was that a sortie would be successful, the rebels being demoralized by the defeat of the day before. If it had been successful the rebellion in this portion of the Soudan would have been finished. In fact, the rebels were in full retreat when their covering cavalry made the charge which defeated our men, and then the retreating infantry returned, followed up the charge of the cavalry, and now occupy their old positions. Our attack was supported on the left flank by a force on board three armed steamers, who pushed below the rebel positions."

Thus ended this inglorious attack on the rebels, the first made upon them from Khartoum. Most unfortunate it was that the cowardice displayed by Baker Pasha's troops between Trinkitat and Tokar on the 6th February 1884 was repeated, and that the Government troops did not make a greater show of fighting when victory was really in their hands. The panic created in the first instance was without reason, and was the mainspring, no doubt, of the retreat. Had the garrison of Khartoum won the day—had they profited by the success gained ere the two officers rushed back on to the front lines of the advancing troops—what a different story we might have had to tell of Khartoum and those who were left in it! How changed would have been the whole after-proceedings! Gordon saved; perhaps Khartoum saved; loss of lives and treasure obviated; no advance of the British in the desert to meet a determined foe. For had this first onslaught of Gordon's men been crowned with success, it in all probability would, as has been stated, have turned the tide of the rebellion. Terror would have been struck into the hearts of the besieging force, not by the defeat alone, but by the magic name of Gordon, whose prowess the Arabs were

well acquainted with, and by the conviction that to meet him was to court death and disaster. Even supposing the victory had not actually spread terror into the ranks of the False Prophet, it would at least have greatly relieved the pressure upon the city, have afforded an opportunity for an honourable evacuation from Khartoum, permitted of the mission of Gordon being completed, maybe, and of his departure with additional lustre shed upon his already brilliant name in fulfilment of the obligation to the King of the Belgians.

Again in Khartoum with the troops (*sic*!) who had behaved so disgracefully, Gordon instituted rigorous inquiries, of course, anent the real cause of the reverse, finding sufficient evidence against the two Pashas to cause their instantaneous arrest. Everything pointed to pre-conceived treachery on their part. The survivors maintained that the two fellows charged into the square; the soldiers, recognising them, opened their ranks, and through this gap the rebel horsemen, following close behind, entered. When the Pashas saw General Gordon after the battle he offered them refreshments, which they refused; but the General's Secretary divining the reason, and they seeing that their treachery was suspected, helped themselves. Another suspicious fact was that the written orders were to attack before daybreak. They disobeyed these orders, attacking at 9 o'clock, whereas a night attack would have been successful. Still, the trusting nature of Gordon, his natural abhorrence to believing anyone guilty, however inertly bad, until that guilt had been indubitably established, declined to accept the popular opinion as to the treachery of the two "worthies," and so took the strictest precautions to save them from the fury of the populace. His nature rebelled even against calling a court-martial, knowing, as he did, that in the existing state of feeling in the city, a violent death awaited them. The court-martial was held. When

excitement had subsided the traitors were tried during the course of two days, convicted, and to the joy of the people they were ignominiously shot. In the house of Hassan Pasha was discovered a great store of rifles and ammunition, and both Pashas had stolen the two months' pay given to the troops on account of six months' arrears. If anything more had been wanted than the testimony adduced by eye-witnesses of their disreputable conduct on the 16th, it was supplied by the son of the defender of Messalamia, who on the 27th March arrived in Khartoum after bribing rebels heavily to allow him to pass in. A few weeks before General Gordon had sent him in a steamer to rescue his mother and family, who were threatened by the rebels on account of his father's (Salak Bey) defence of Messalamia. The steamer was in charge of Said, one of the two Pashas. When the boy landed, Said steamed away and left him to the mercy of the rebels. On his return Said's explanation to Gordon of the youth's absence was that he had deserted; the fact being he was captured on being deserted by Said. With the Arabs, as he was on the 16th, he said that as Gordon's cavalry were about to charge, Said Pasha rode back, breaking his own ranks, with Hassan Pasha, and cut down his own men. Said held up his bloody sword, and called to the rebel cavalry to follow him, saying, "See, I am indeed true to you, I have killed my own officers." Two days prior to the battle Hassan Pasha sent away his family and moved over to the rebels, who boasted they would arrange, as all had been arranged with the Pashas!

Fortunately the defeat of the garrison did not shake the faith in General Gordon. Soldiers and populace recognised where the real evil was, and so took special measures to display their loyalty to him. An Arab came forward and volunteered to lend the General a thousand guineas, free of interest, an offer that was most gladly

accepted, seeing that £40,000 sent for Gordon by the Government, as it was said at the time, had not arrived at Khartoum, that the treasury was exhausted, and pay was due to the troops. Another Arab equipped, armed, and paid two hundred blacks for Gordon's service, and substantial proofs of loyalty were afforded besides these.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NOT ABANDONED?—ISOLATED AT KHARTOUM—RESISTING THE ENEMY—IMPROVED DEFENCES—GORDON STILL DEFIANT—WONDERFUL RESOURCES—DARK DAYS—REBELLION IN THE CITY—BASHI-BAZOUKS DISARMED—REPORTED ADVANCE OF THE BRITISH—RENEWED HOPE—AGAIN DESPAIR—SUSTAINED FIRING—THE REBEL LOSSES—GORDON'S FAITH IN HEAVEN—"NOTHING BUT GOD'S MERCY"—NO BRITISH TROOPS—MEASURES FOR EVACUATION—ESCAPE NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT DISHONOUR—SAFE IN KHARTOUM—TURKISH SOLDIERS—WHY BRITISH TROOPS WERE NOT DESPATCHED—"THE SITUATION IS DESPERATE"—THE "INDELIBLE DISGRACE" TELEGRAM.

"We are daily expecting British troops," wrote Mr. Power from Khartoum on the 23rd March. "We cannot bring ourselves to believe that we are to be abandoned by the Government. Our existence depends on England."

The truth is the situation at Khartoum had become desperate. Isolated, surrounded by enraged fanatics thirsting for their blood, and with no help obtainable for 500 miles on the one hand—at Suakim, had it been deemed advisable and possible to utilise that help—and nearly two thousand miles on the other—at Cairo and Alexandria—the garrison must perforce fight for dear life. They could not maintain a passive resistance; they could not

permit themselves to be constituted practice for the Remingtons obtained by the rebels from Hicks Pasha's annihilated army, and from garrisons that had succumbed in Senaar and Kordofan; they must of necessity see to the provisions for daily sustenance, and so they had to resist the repeated assaults of their savage enemies. Unhappy, and yet withal often cheerful, Gordon had poor material at command to resist these constant annoyances and endeavours to reach his very life-blood and that of the troops and civilians, but he accomplished what no other mortal could have improved upon. He strengthened the fortifications—save the mark!—improved upon what Nature had provided in the shape of defences, mounting a Krupp gun on an iron lighter, that he might reach the rebel camp from the river, armed steamers to spread consternation among his foes, and initiated an elaborate scheme of mines to spring them upon the besieging force, where they least expected them, with death-dealing and alarming effects. Brave Gordon, to guide and control with only two Englishmen as his companions, with treachery stalking around, secret though it might be, and with a strong, fearless, determined foe without! Who but Gordon would not have yielded to dark despair?

Very early in those dreadfully beclouded days was Gordon confronted with mutiny. Two hundred and seventy Bashi-Bazouks refused to occupy two large fortified houses; but brave as a lion, and conscious of the tremendous responsibility weighing upon him, Gordon acted as he had done twenty years before in China, when confronted by a sullen band of mutinous soldiers, any one of whom might have raised his rifle and shot him dead, Gordon thought of no parley. Firm as a rock, he disbanded the two hundred and seventy officers and men, and commanded them to relinquish their positions in the garrison. On the 24th March the rebel camp was shelled by means of a Krupp gun to the north bank of the Blue Nile, 116 of the enemy being killed or wounded.

One shell not bursting a crowd of Arabs surrounded it to discover the mechanism, when the missile exploded, killing or maiming 16 of the curious. Halfiyeh, too, which had passed into the hands of the Mahdists, after the gallant rescue of its defenders, was shelled from four of Gordon's steamers, and some destruction was wrought; the Arabs were allowed to pour into a village on the opposite bank to that on which the palace stood, whereupon they were shelled and obliged to abandon their ground.

Now the report in the city was that the English were coming. Again, nothing could be learned that rescue was near; anon; the rebels were said to be retreating towards Senaar, only, however, to be proved false, by further massing of the Mahdists and the free exchange of shots. One day Gordon's Bashi-Bazouks went out into the plain, but were driven back by the Arab cavalry, who began to fire upon the palace, and otherwise annoy the entrapped garrison. On the 31st March a number of Bashi-Bazouks were sent to a village to look for firewood. This was a signal for a descent of the rebels from their camp, when the troops who had sallied out retreated, but, owing to the way in which a Krupp twenty-pounder at the palace was worked, they only lost one man by the rebel's cavalry charge. Then it was that the enemy thronged into the village and opened fire upon the palace with Remingtons, Gordon replying with canister and shell. A quiet night was succeeded by a shower of bullets discharged into the palace from the opposite side of the river. By the fire of one Krupp gun the rebels lost in a single day 40 killed and eight wounded, and 16 horses; neither did the garrison escape scot free.

This was the 1st of April; Gordon had entered Khar-¹⁸⁸⁴toum on the 19th February, and yet no news had been received from the outside world since the 10th March. Cruel, cruel irony of Fate to allow of such an ending to buoyant expectations of speedy deliverance!

Did Gordon lose faith in that Divine Being in whom he had ever sought refuge, to whom he appealed for consolation, and not in vain, in whose hand he had oft acknowledged he was but a chisel, who directed, he had said, his ways, whose grand heart had ever glowed with profound devotion, who had urged "Trust in the Lord, with all thy heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy path"—did he trust in Him who had been his great strength and stay, surrounded as he was by hungry foes, and forsaken, apparently, by men? Not he. Steadfast in heart, he leaned upon his God still; pure in spirit, he was prepared, as he wrote at the time, for the worst. "I only feel trust in God's mercy, for there is nothing else," Gordon remarked in one of his communications, "I recognise in all this business," he confided to Mr. Power, "a regular concatenation of events, many links of which brought misfortune, but as a whole, the course of events tend towards a good end, and it persuades me that God's ways are not man's ways. I will give you the links as they come in the chain. 1. If the Egyptians had not gone to Tokar, Commander Moncrieff would not have been killed, and General Baker would not have gone to Trinkitat. 2. Had I gone to Suakim the attack of General Baker would not have taken place. 3. Had General Baker not been defeated, the British forces would not have interfered. Teb was the first step which involved them in operations, and the defeat of General Baker, combined with the treachery of the two Pashas, brought the rebels down here and cut off our Chaggia troops at Halfiyeh. 4. Had not the Chaggias been cut off we might have remained quiet. 5. The cutting off of the Chaggias led to our advance against the enemy and our defeat. 6. Had we been victorious I should have been ignorant of the treachery of the Pashas who are to be shot to-morrow morning; our defeat disclosed it, so saved us from greater evils. 7. Had not the steamer *Tewfikieh* come up, we would not have made our river

attack, which cost the rebels so dear, and restored confidence to the town. 8. Our defeat caused greater precautions, hitherto neglected in the town. 9. The implicit confidence I had in the two Pashas lured them on to their ruin, for they presumed on a continuance of the same confidence sufficiently to show their hands, and in no way did they more completely show this to be the case than in their return here after the defeat, and their treason in the field. 10. Had the rebels not been enticed to Halfiyeh by the Pashas, as was in all probability the case at the particular time they did advance, Her Majesty's Government might have considered it impossible for me to have settled the country, and might have declined, after General Graham's victory, any further operations against them. The rebel advance and our defeat happened just at the right time to retain Her Majesty's troops. Had these two events happened in two months' time, a British advance would have been much hampered by the hot weather."

Struggling with man, Gordon had no hope of breaking through the lines by which he was hemmed in, unless aid came to him on the instructions of the Government which had despatched him to what had now become his fast-bound prison. As we have seen, he had been obliged to abandon reluctantly, anticipation of help through Zebehr, denied to him; he had asked for British troops *via* Suakim and Berber, and none had been sent, and he resolves to ask the Government to inform him, in very mercy, it would seem, what their real intentions were. "If the immediate evacuation of Khartoum is determined upon, irrespective of outlying towns, I would propose to send down all the Cairo employés and white troops with Colonel Stewart to Berber, where he could await your orders. I would also ask Her Majesty's Government to accept the resignation of my commission, and I would take all steamers and stores up to the Equatorial and Bahr-Gazelle provinces, and consider these provinces as under the King of the Belgians. If you, therefore, determine on the immediate evacuation

of Khartoum tell me ; this is my idea. If you object, tell me. It is the only solution I can see if the immediate evacuation of Khartoum, irrespective of the outlying towns, is determined upon."

Gordon was told, in reply, to hold on at Khartoum, that if he was unable to establish a settled government in the city, he must evacuate Khartoum, and save the garrison by conducting it himself to Berber without delay, and that he must not resign his commission. He could not have gone to Berber, for Khartoum was surrounded—not as it afterwards was, true, for the instructions were telegraphed on the 13th March, though nothing had been heard from the outside world for three days before then. Query, did Gordon receive the message of the 13th ? The situation fairly looked at, Gordon might have returned on Berber, acting on instructions, immediately ; but granted employes and Egyptians could have been conveyed—which, again, seems improbable, remembering the lack of steamers for transport—could Gordon have left a settled form of government behind ? He had declared often that he could not, Zebehr having been refused him. Gordon, Stewart, and Power might have escaped then, beyond doubt, but they had souls far above such meanness. We must conclude, therefore, that the instructions of Lord Granville of the 13th March were impossible of fulfilment.

Dating a despatch the 31st March, Gordon telegraphed : "The enemy do not appear to number more than 1,500, and of these there are not, perhaps, more than 150 determined men, who keep the tag-rag-and-bobtail together. Yet I dare not go out for fear of the town. Had you sent Zebehr, how different would have been the state of affairs." And, on the 31st March : "I wish I could convey to you my impression of the trumpery nature of this revolt, which 500 determined men could put down. I break my head over my impotence, and the more so when I feel that, once the Soudan taken, you may expect such a crop of trouble in all Moslem states. Be assured for the present, and for

the next two months, we are as safe here as at Cairo. If you could get by good payment, 3,000 Turkish infantry, and 1,000 Turkish cavalry, the affair, including the crushing of the Mahdi, would be accomplished in four months."

Shut up as he was in Khartoum, there was no less anxiety in England that Gordon and those with him should be relieved. Public opinion was both for and against relieving Khartoum thus soon by British military intervention. Many there were who would have had the Suakim-Berber road opened at all costs when victory had crowned the British arms at Tamai on the 28th March, at the exact time Gordon was persisting so urgently for aid, and three days before he had written that 500 men could clear Khartoum of invaders, and many there were who beseeched the Government not to permit the troops then on the Red Sea coast to proceed inland in the direction of Khartoum. The views of the British Consul-General in Egypt (Sir Evelyn Baring), as contained in a despatch of the 24th March, were that the successes gained by General Graham at El Teb and Tamai would result in the opening of the road to Berber, though Sir Evelyn thought that any action the British commander could take at or near Suakim would not exert much influence over the tribes between Berber and Khartoum. One plan was, Sir E. Baring stated, to trust to Gordon being able to maintain himself at Khartoum till the autumn, when the heat of the summer would have passed, and operations on the Suakim-Berber road would be less dangerous, and another to send a portion of General Graham's army to Berber with instructions to open up communication with Khartoum. The former was, however, fraught with great risk, and the latter with great difficulty. If the military operation was possible, he thought an effort should be made to relieve Gordon, as he requested, from Suakim.

General Stephenson, the British Commander-in-Chief at Cairo, and Sir Evelyn Wood (in command of the infantry), while admitting the very great risk to the health

of the troops, besides the extraordinary military risks, were of opinion that the undertaking was possible.

There was issued on the 28th March a despatch from Lord Granville, of that date to Sir E. Baring, in which he stated very fully the reasons of the Government for refusing to send troops to Berber, although only 280 miles separated those in the Red Sea littoral from that town, a difficult country intervening, however, and the unhealthy season having begun.

Lord Granville, after adverting to the mission of General Gordon, as originally designed and decided upon, as of a pacific nature, sketched the instructions given to Gordon and the development of events since the day of his appointment, in which the discretionary power of Gordon was admitted, saying that, notwithstanding, the demand for a military demonstration by a British force at Berber was contrary to the policy originally agreed upon, it had been very carefully considered, and Her Majesty's Government would not have willingly refused it, coming from General Gordon, with the additional weight of Sir E. Baring's concurrence, if the military and other objections to it had not appeared conclusive. The distance, the nature of the country to be traversed, and, above all, the climate, rendered the march of a British force to Berber at that season an undertaking so difficult as almost to be impracticable. For a large body of European troops of all arms, the military authorities regarded the expedition as impossible; while for a small force of cavalry to undertake the expedition, without support or communication, in the face of possible opposition by largely superior numbers, would be an extremely hazardous venture, and might, in the end, prove useless. The objections to sending an Indian force were no less considerable. On the other hand, the condition of affairs, continued the Foreign Secretary, did not appear to be such as to call for measures attended by so much risk, and entailing, possibly, a great loss of life, and certainly large expenditure. Moreover,

Khartoum was understood to be victualled for six months, and its garrison sufficient for its security.

Denied Zebehr and refused the aid of British troops for reasons now fully stated, Gordon had to trust implicitly, as we have stated, to his own resources, or, as he himself would have it, to Him who directed "the carpenter's chisel." "Glad to hear you are well," he communicated to a friend in Vienna; "we are not so badly off as we might be, and I continue to hope against hope." To Commander Maxwell—"We exist day by day, and, though excitement is nice sometimes, we can have too much of it, while the responsibility is heavy. I can only trust in God's mercy, for there is nothing else!" From M. Herbin, who was at Khartoum, the French Consul-General at Cairo (M. Barrere) received a short note: "I have no fear, and am fully prepared for the worst. The situation is desperate. The health generally is good."

Truly the situation was "desperate," But Gordon's spirit flagged not. He was equal to the occasion. Often, very often, had he faced death, and the, to us, dread Destroyer would have come to him as a positive blessing had so many poor wretches not depended upon him.

To them, the populace who looked to him for succour, and the soldiers who were faithful to him in adversity, he was the same Gordon as of yore :

His ready smile a parent's warmth exprest,
Their welfare pleased him, and their care distrest.
To them his heart, his love, his grief were given.

* * * * *

As some tall cliff, that rears its honoured form,
Swells from the vale, and, midway, leaves the storm—
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head!

One day the report at Khartoum was that the Government had relented, and had despatched Zebehr Pasha, and that he was at Korosko, and he forthwith telegraphs, on the 7th April, to Zebehr:—"I have appointed you Assistant Governor-General of the Soudan. You will advise me on your arrival at Berber, and, if possible, I

will send you two steamers. These, with the other two steamers now at Berber, will provide you with iron upon parapets, in order to protect the troops on board. Take, also, as many as you can of the Galzieen tribe, and make frequent skirmishes, but do not expose yourself." The day following he wired to the Government that a messenger had arrived with letters from Berber, and stated that Zebehr was at Korosko. Scarcely a day passed, Gordon continued, without him inflicting losses on the rebels, which losses were altogether unnecessary if he was not eventually to succeed. Negotiations were of no avail in the direction of trying to open the road to Berber. The Government had refused him troops; he had telegraphed to Sir Samuel Baker to make an appeal to the British and American millionaires to give him £300,000 to engage 3,000 Turkish troops from the Sultan, to send them to Khartoum. This was to settle the Soudan and the Mahdi for ever. He did not "see the fun" of being caught in Khartoum to walk about the streets as a dervish with sandalled feet; not that (p.v.) he would ever be taken alive. "It would be the climax of meanness, after I had borrowed money from the people here, and called on them to sell their grain at a low price, &c., to go and abandon them without using every effort to relieve them, whether those efforts are diplomatically correct or not, and I feel sure, whatever you may feel diplomatically, I have your support, and that of every man professing himself a gentleman, in private."

The rumour of Zebehr's coming was, as we know, false—he was never commissioned to proceed to the Soudan. Nay, that the Government had reasons in addition to those they made public for not consenting to the request of Gordon, may be inferred from the fact that very practical effect was given to their suspicions on the 14th March, 1885, when Zebehr and his son, with three other individuals, were arrested by the military police at Alexandria, placed at once on board the *Iris*, under sealed

orders, though bound, it was stated at the time, for Cyprus, where no communication could be had with him, secret or otherwise, except through British officers. His loyalty had been questioned, and the arrest was owing to the discovery of correspondence showing he had been in direct communication with the Mahdi and his emissaries for some time. Who can say that, the suspicions being well grounded, the despatch of Zebehr to Khartoum would not have hastened a deplorable calamity treachery was only awaiting a favourable opportunity to consummate?

Gordon saw this all too soon, and on the 13th April he informed Colonel Stewart and Mr. Power that, as British troops were not coming to the relief of Khartoum, they could take their choice of retreating with him to the Equator or trying to reach Berber. Colonel Stewart telegraphed that General Gordon had acquainted him with the intention of the Government not to relieve Khartoum, and proposed he should go to Berber and trust to their negotiations for opening up the road from Suakim to Berber. General Gordon had told the Government as to what he intended doing, and, weighing all the circumstances, and doubting the success of the Government opening the road to Berber, unless by the advance of troops, he was inclined to think his retreat would be, perhaps, safest by the Equator. He would, therefore, follow the fortunes of General Gordon. Mr. Power intimated that he, also, preferred the route to the Equator "as the least risky."

Positively, General Gordon could not have seriously contemplated evacuating Khartoum, which was hemmed in, be it remembered; he could not have been guilty of that "climax of meanness:" abandoning the people of the city. Death, ten thousand times, before dishonour. His very next telegram bore the same date as those from Stewart and Power, confirm this to the hilt, and is corroborated, again, by the fact that neither Stewart nor Power left Khartoum for months afterwards, and that Gordon

1884

remained behind. The telegram was—"Khartoum, April 16th, 1884, evening. As far as I can understand, the situation is this: You (the British Government) state your intention of not sending any relief up here or to Berber, and you refuse me Zebehr. I consider myself free to act according to circumstances. *I shall hold on here as long as I can*, and if I can suppress the rebellion I shall do so. If I cannot, I shall retire to the Equator, and leave you the *indelible disgrace* of abandoning the garrisons of Senaar, Kassala, Berber, and Dongola, *with the certainty* that you will eventually be forced to smash up the Mahdi under great difficulties if you would retain peace in Egypt."

This was the last communication from Khartoum for the extraordinary period of five months. Enclosed in a band of forged steel, the telegraph wires cut, the waterway dammed, routes by the desert closed, no exchange of thought or word reached Khartoum from the outer world, nor *vice versâ*. Metaphorically speaking, the Egyptian darkness of Pharaoh's day had settled o'er the city. For aught the inhabitants of that city resting upon the confluence of the Blue and White Niles could tell of the doings of fellow-creatures, those who were not enemies, without, they might have been tenants of another planet. They knew not whether they were absolutely forsaken, or whether, at last, measures were being prosecuted for their release. All was dim uncertainty. They had but to live unto themselves and for themselves—ostensibly, they were not to renew acquaintance with the world. Worse than sailors upon a raft at sea, shipwrecked, forlorn, there was no favouring breeze to conduct them to a haven of rest. One advantage only they had over the poor mariner, and it was that they had a supply of food. But even that could not last. They would have had none spared to them had it not been that early in this dreadful siege nearly seven thousand people had deserted, or left of their own free will, to make common cause with the

enemy. Apparently, the misfortune was a dire one at the first blush, but now the faithful to that grand central figure realised that had the inhabitants behind the fortified mud walls and the protecting river not been reduced in number by the departure of these seven thousand men, women and children, their condition would have been similar to that of the wrecked sailor, with little or no sustenance upon which he could lay his hand. They could but cultivate the land within the fortified area, they could only fall back upon the strange resources of that wonderful genius they blessed—Senaar, the fruitful field, the granary of Khartoum, was theirs no longer. Grim starvation was the prospect, death by the bullet or the spear the alternative. Pitiable, truly pitiable, were the straits to which an inveterate foe had reduced them!

CHAPTER XIX.

**THE RESCUE OF GORDON DEMANDED—VOTES OF CENSURE—
EXCITEMENT IN THE COUNTRY—ALLEGATIONS OF PAR-
SIMONY AND COWARDICE—PROPOSED VOLUNTEER EX-
PEDITION TO KHARTOUM—CHAOS AT BERBER—FEARS
OF THE GOVERNOR—MASSACRE OF REFUGEES—SHENDY
INVESTED—TOUCHING APPEAL FROM BERBER—AN
EGYPTIAN EXPEDITION CANCELLED — NO HELP FOR
BERBER—THREATENED RESIGNATION OF NUBAR PASHA
—THE MAHDI DEMANDS SUBMISSION—TROOPS ORDERED
TO ASSOUAN—CONFLICTING REPORTS—ALARMING IN-
TELLIGENCE — RUMOURED FALL OF KHARTOUM AND
CAPTURE OF GORDON—THE REBELS IN BERBER: CON-
SEQUENCES.**

IN England arose the cry, loud and long, "The British to the rescue." Gordon was, countless thousands of people persisted, to be rescued at all costs, and in face of desperate hazards. A stigma was thrown upon the English name in every land upon the globe, it was urged, by the obduracy of Mr. Gladstone's Government, the prestige of England was surely falling away in the sight of all nations, and "idelibile disgrace," as Gordon had remarked, was attaching itself to the Ministry and their supporters upon the floor of both Houses of Parliament, and in the cities, towns, and villages, east, west, north, and south. The Government still holding firmly by the

policy of not initiating armed intervention for the relief of Khartoum, and advised that the employment of Turkish troops was entirely out of the question, were imperturbable; the distance, the nature of the country to be traversed, and the deadly climatic influences were yet factors upon which they based their objections. At the same time the Government expressed their willingness to do that which could be practically effected for the protection of Gordon, but it must be according to the best information available to them, and they would not be driven, they averred, into acting before they understood the necessity, and "before the time when it must be done for the interest and the honour of the country." In the House of Lords a vote of censure, moved by Lord Salisbury, the Conservative leader, had been passed upon the Government, and a like resolution had been introduced in the House of Commons, by Sir Stafford Northcote, on behalf of the Opposition, but this was defeated by 311 votes to 262. This was in February, on the very day Gordon arrived at Khartoum. On May 13th, again, another vote of censure was rejected—one alleging the abandonment of Gordon by the Government, but a second time the policy of the Ministry was upheld—the division being 303 to 275. On the other hand, the House of Lords was emphatic in its condemnation of the inaction of the Government in not seeking to rescue Gordon. Outside Parliament the Liberals remained staunch to Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues, but in many towns, although the extension of the franchise was agitating the public mind, indignation meetings were held, at which the Government were roundly blamed for despatching Gordon as their envoy on a perilous mission and then leaving Khartoum and him to their fate.

And so opinion was divided for and against the Government.

Parsimony and moral cowardice were charged against the Government among a host of other allegations levelled

right and left, and eventually, Gordon's appeal to Sir Samuel Baker for assistance having been disseminated, subscriptions poured in, only to be returned, however, with the explanation that any effort of the Government—which was still anticipated as irresistible—would render private enterprise aiming at Gordon's release unnecessary. The Baroness Burdett-Coutts, whose liberality was proverbial, wrote that she had received communications, or rather entreaties, from many personally unknown to her to aid in the organization by public subscription of a volunteer movement to attempt the relief of General Gordon. Her correspondents were poor, but they offered to entrust to the Baroness all they could afford of their small means, and to raise their voices in unison with their wealthier fellow-countrymen "against a base surrender of a nation's good faith and honour as well as a gallant and Christian life—a surrender which has united in common indignation the French workman of Lyons, who offers his 20f. to the English lady who, it is stated, has promised £5,000 for Gordon's release."

Frantic efforts were made to communicate with Gordon. But [of] no avail. Largesse was offered to natives who would convey to him a message and bring back a reply—a few essayed the task, but were either captured or forced to retrace their steps. The rebel lines were simply impenetrable. From the British Foreign Office were issued imperative orders that messengers should be sent at intervals through Dongola, as well as Berber, to inform Gordon in cypher of the great anxiety of the Government and the country in his behalf, and sanction was given for the despatch of two British officers to Berber for the purpose of co-operating, if possible, with General Gordon.

Berber, indeed! At Berber all was chaos, in the desert upon each side of the Nile, right away beyond Shendy, Metammeh, and Gubat to Khartoum revolt held undisputed sway, rebels swarmed here, there, and everywhere upon the ordinary lines of communication between Berber

and Khartoum; the Mahdi's power had rolled northwards and eastwards with the force of a dreaded Alpine avalanche.

Reports were current a fortnight after the investment of Khartoum was completed that Berber was in imminent danger, that a steamer was wrecked at a point equi-distant between Khartoum and Berber, and that 300 refugees who were making their way to the latter town were attacked while upon a sandbank near Shendy and cruelly massacred. Then, on the 20th April, the Governor of Berber, whom Gordon had raised to office, with a Council of Notables, telegraphed to Cairo that the Bishereens, a neighbouring tribe, were ready to join the rebels, and that he feared Berber would be surrounded in two days, adding, "The Government having abandoned us, we can only trust in God." He confirmed the news that the garrison of Shendy was surrounded at Aliab. Everyone who could do so was, at that time, leaving Berber, the telegraph clerks desired to vacate their posts, and intelligence came that a body of troops who had gone forward with a view to helping the refugees were returning, having learned of the massacre. That the employés at Berber were anxious to leave before being caught in the net that was being cast around them was true enough. They had, on the 15th April, joined with others in the town in an appeal to the Egyptian Government stating that they had come to the Soudan relying on the support and protection of the Government, and that if they were abandoned through indifference or weakness the honour of Egypt would be everlastingly tarnished in thus handing them over to death and dishonour. If Egypt had given up the Soudan to England, they implored "that great, chivalrous, and humane power" to come to their help, for it was full time. Could the Government raise them again after their death? They awaited help from England, from their Government, or from any charitable Power, for if the same condition of things remained for ten days or a fortnight more the

country would be ravaged, and they would be lost. They appealed to the Egyptian Government to quiet their minds by announcing the immediate despatch of a force to their assistance. To supplement this touching appeal the Governor of Berber telegraphed on the 23rd April: "We are in great danger. Mahdi's nominee for my post has assembled populations of southern portion of this province. At his approach every village joins him. A party of rebels to the west of this town await his arrival daily to attack us. We have only sixty cases of ammunition. Pray send ammunition quickly from Assouan by Korosko, and also the troops from Assouan, whom I have asked for. If Berber falls there will be no more hope for the Soudan. The telegraph may be cut any day. Answer quickly."

Lord Granville had telegraphed on the 21st to Mr. Egerton, acting for the Consul-General in Cairo (Sir E. Baring, who had left for England) to report, after consultation with the Egyptian Premier (Nubar Pasha), General Stephenson, and General E. Wood, whether there was any step, by negotiation or otherwise, which could be taken at once to relieve Berber, to which Mr. Egerton replied that Hassein Khalifa had suggested that two battalions of Egyptian troops at Assouan, if moved forward, might save Berber, and the day the Governor despatched his telegram direct to the Egyptian Government pleading for ammunition and troops Mr. Egerton further answered Earl Granville that in the opinion of Nubar Pasha and Generals Stephenson and Wood there was no possibility of negotiating without force to back the Governor of Berber. Nubar Pasha's personal opinion was, that considering the pressing demands of Hassein, two Egyptian battalions at Assouan and 500 Ababdees, when collected, should be sent on at once to Berber. The generals strongly objected to sending Egyptians alone, but considered it possible to send an Anglo-Egyptian force to Berber, either over the Korosko desert, or, if prevented

from want of camels, which it would be necessary to obtain in very large numbers, and difficulty of water supply, then by Wady Halfa and Dongola. At the most favourable computation the actual time of transit would not be less than eight weeks from the time it started, for a force to arrive at Berber by the Korosko Abu Ahmed route, and about double that time by Dongola. All that could be done for the immediate safety of Berber was, Mr. Egerton believed, to give the assurance that English material aid should be rendered as soon as practicable. Preparation, such as pushing on an Egyptian detachment to Korosko to arrange the water supply, &c., would strengthen that assurance. Mr. Egerton, in a later telegram of the same date, could not conceal his belief that it would be almost madness to run the risk of sending an English or Egyptian force by the routes suggested. Lord Granville's prompt answer was: "We cannot sanction an attempt to send an English force at this season to Berber *via* Korosko, or to send Egyptian troops alone. Tell Hassein Kālifa that no immediate assistance can be given to him, as an expedition by the river could not, if undertaken, arrive at Berber according to your telegram in less than sixteen weeks from starting."

In this way was poor, distraught Hassein Kālifa, Governor of Berber, whom Gordon had appointed to his office, on behalf of the Government, left—we do not like the word "abandoned"—to his own resources, as was General Gordon 220 miles further up the Nile. The reasons for the decision of the Government have been sufficiently explained from the words of Lord Granville. Further, Mr. Gladstone observed from his place in the House of Commons, about this period, that the Government were of opinion, according to all the information they possessed, that there would be no essential change in the position of Khartoum in consequence of the change in the position of Berber.

Nubar Pasha distinctly refused to hold office any longer

unless help was sent immediately to the town. And, as a fact, on the 24th April a Council was held at Cairo, Mr. Egerton and General Wood being present, to discuss the advisability of the despatch of a mixed force of British and Egyptian troops to Berber. On the 25th the Council resumed its sitting under the presidency of the Khedive, at which a resolution was adopted declaring the immediate despatch of troops to Upper Egypt to be necessary. However, the next intelligence from Cairo was that although a further telegram had been received from Berber confirming previous accounts as to the desperate straits to which the town was reduced, and asking for help, all thought of despatching an Egyptian or joint expedition had been abandoned for the present in consequence of the decision of the British Cabinet. Nevertheless, it was understood that an expedition would start later on in the season, and that the Nile should be surveyed at once above Wady Halfa.

Reports were not long in reaching Cairo that Berber had fallen; but they were unconfirmed. The Governor telegraphed that he could hold out a little, but the Mahdi had sent emirs and emissaries to the ulemas at Berber and all the villages in its district, and also the districts between Shendy and Khartoum, demanding instantaneous submission "to the Messiah, the long expected one." There were 700 fighting men only in the garrison. The Khedive and the Government were deeply affected at this intelligence as Hassein had asked for help continually for the last month. Whether garrisons, refugees, officials, including several faithful Government servants, who, despite danger, had gallantly discharged their duties, were captured or massacred seemed uncertain. Tribes around Berber became defected it was known, and, as they had always been loyal, it was taken as a proof that the hope of assistance had been abandoned. But the Governor of Berber was instructed to act as he thought proper, that was to evacuate the town or defend it. He

began by ordering evacuation, and none too soon, for 500 Bashi-Bazouks went over to the enemy, the villages to the north as far as Merrogee revolted, and completely closed the road to Berber. Report had it that the Koroske desert, through which the Berber refugees would pass, unless they held on their course upon the waters of the Nile through Dongola, was closed likewise, and that the inhabitants of Girgeh, who had been previously ripe for revolt, had been further excited by a disciple of the Mahdi, who, coming from Cairo, had entered all the villages on the Nile, thus far, and made proselytes of them all.

Telegraph clerks abandoned Berber in keeping with alternatives afforded to them, refugees were constantly making for Assouan, and to add to the general feeling of insecurity, Osman Digna was reported to be at Handoub with an increased following, preparing to attack Suakim, which had been denuded of troops save two regiments of infantry under Major Chermiside.

However, there were signs in the second week of May that the Soudan was not to be wholly abandoned to anarchy and the Mahdi. Egyptian officers left Cairo to reconnoitre southwards, and on the 14th troops of the Egyptian army were ordered to Assouan. By midsummer, reinforcements, among them English officers, had arrived south of Cairo at Wady Halfa, Assouan, Korosko, Mer-gashab—between the Nile and the Red Sea—and Assiout, and on the 8th July the Royal Sussex Regiment augmented the force at Assouan.

During the interval very conflicting and stirring reports were circulated about the situation at Berber. Now the rumour was that the garrison had succumbed to the influence of the Mahdists and that Berber had fallen; again, that Berber was still loyal and not even closely invested—that the rebels who were in the vicinity of the town had not implements of war with them. Anon it was stated that hostilities had been suspended on condition Hassein should allow the rebels to possess the

town when Khartoum had fallen, and then an Arab was detained at Korosko who represented himself as the sole survivor of the Berber garrison. This individual's tale was that he accompanied the Governor's nephew and Signor Cuzzi in an attempt to escape from Berber, all three being captured, however, by the rebels. They were compelled to profess a belief in the Mahdi in order to save their lives, and to adopt the False Prophet's uniform. Signor Cuzzi turned, he said, Moslem. The defenders of Berber fought bravely for two hours, and then, their ammunition being exhausted, the rebels "rushed" the town and slaughtered the garrison of 1,500 men and about 2,000 of the male population, sparing the women and children. The Arab estimated the rebels to number 45,000 (?). He alleged that the Mahdi was then marching on Dongola with 35,000 men, and hoped to capture the town before the sacred month of Ramadan. By some English and Egyptian officials the reported fall of Berber was believed, by others no credence was given to it, the opinion being that, as the Mahdi was strongly interested in reports of his victories spreading, nothing should be believed until there was the clearest proof that the Oriental mind was not the origin of such statements. Indeed, a month after this circumstantial report three parties of pilgrims from the neighbourhood arrived further north and stated positively that neither Khartoum nor Berber had fallen and that both places were well provisioned. Certain it is that no army was marching on Dongola.

Alarms there were of a most serious character with regard to Khartoum at intervals during the summer months. At one time that Gordon had been assassinated, at another that he had been wounded and taken prisoner, and, again, that the Mahdi was pressing him so closely that the garrison had resigned all hope. One letter contained an account speaking of the fall of Khartoum in the latter end of May, and as following soon after the capture of Berber, where a horrible massacre took place. In cor-

roboration a man arrived in Lower Egypt, and said he left Khartoum on the 23rd May, when the representative of the False Prophet was in the city, and ordered Soudini troops who had assisted General Gordon to be hanged opposite the Roman Catholic Mission. No hair of the General's had been touched, as the Mahdi flattered himself that his distinguished captive would be converted to the faith of Islam. As though to make confusion worse confounded the ensuing report was that so far from Khartoum and Berber having succumbed, General Gordon had proceeded down the river to Shendy, taken the stronghold, and then continued his journey to Berber, and after meeting with sustained resistance, captured it from the rebels. All was painful doubt and uncertainty.

Viewed dispassionately in later days it does appear passing strange that the truth could not be placed beyond all speculation. From Korosko, where Egyptian troops were stationed, to Berber was a distance of some 400 miles only across the desert, Gordon and Stewart had traversed scarcely six months before, and by the river from Abu Hamed to Berber itself; from Suakim to Berber was not more than 280 miles, and the desert intervening between Dongola, whence telegrams were constantly arriving from the Mudir, was no further in extent. Yet neither the British Government nor the Council at Cairo could say whether Berber had fallen or not; they were equally uninformed of the condition of Khartoum. Anxiety enough there was in very truth, but no intelligence upon which reliance could be founded. Khartoum and Berber had been variously described as the key of Egypt proper. Yet they might or might not be in the hands of the revolutionists—the persistent rumours that the Mahdi was marching towards Dongola and the Egyptian outposts with an army of 40,000 followers might or might not be correct. Anxiety was overbearing—alternately hopes and fears were not wanting in expression. Why not have pushed forward scouting parties into the desert, urged

some; why endanger their lives, contended others, when at any moment of their journeyings they might be cut off by a band of robbers or a section of the great army the Mahdi had despatched to overrun Lower Egypt and chase them, as he threatened, into the sea; why set on foot measures which could not be supported by force when Egyptian troops could not be trusted, when it was impolitic to employ Turks, and when the English could not withstand the evils of the hot season?

At last there was no resisting the conviction that Berber had fallen. On the 2nd August a merchant reached Assouan who had left Berber fifteen days previously, and stated unhesitatingly that the fall of Berber occurred sixty-two days before. He confirmed, also, the story of the massacre, adding that Hassein Pasha, the Governor, was a prisoner. The rebels consisted of the Bisheeren and Zebehr's tribes, and they had built a wall on the Khartoum side of the city as a protection against the gunboats of General Gordon. Not long after the arrival of the merchant at Assouan a number of the Berber garrison succeeded in obtaining their release, and from them it was ascertained that Berber had undoubtedly fallen. The garrison consisted, according to their representations, of 2,300 men, with two steamers and one gun. Fifty thousand Arabs surrounded the town and threw up earthworks. Then Hassein Pasha held a council of officers, and decided to hold out. Skirmishes went on for five days, during which time letters passed in and out of the town. One morning a general assault was begun at three o'clock on the town, and was finished by eight o'clock. The north side was first attacked, and under cover of the fire the rebels "rushed" the south side. The soldiers fought hard in the town, but were defeated. Many soldiers escaped across the river, but were finally overcome. There was no scarcity of ammunition during the fight. Six hundred and thirty-six officers were said to be at Berber as slaves, where the name of

Mohammed Ahmed was used in the prayers of the rebels instead of the Sultan's.

The capture of Berber was a grand *coup* for the rebels. Rifles, ammunition, and military stores were taken, and a rich treasury chest was acquired with them, including a very large sum of money sent after Gordon for payment of the troops, the procuration of supplies, and as where-withal to secure the allegiance of wavering sheiks. Moreover Berber, as a strategical position was second only to Khartoum. Situate upon the Nile, half-way between Khartoum and Suakim, it commanded the route between the former place and the Red Sea coast; it was the key to the route so emphatically favoured by Gordon, and by not a few military authorities, as the most advisable in operations having for their object the relief of the city. Moreover, it was the key-stone to the arch by which an advancing force from the north could not lightly ignore. Whether an expedition trusted to the bosom of the Nile from Lower Egypt, by Assiout, Assouan, Korosko, Wady Halfa, Dongola, Merawi, and Abu Hamed, or, having "touched" Korosko, crossed the intervening desert to strike the Nile again at Abu Hamed, Berber was a very important disideratum. It could not be left upon the flank, nor yet in the rear—a force from Suakim must perforce pass through it. Berber, therefore, in the possession of the rebels was an immense gain to them—a loss to a Khartoum relieving force in a corresponding degree. Its capture by the hordes owing allegiance to the False Prophet meant the detachment of a strong column to capture and hold it, whereas still loyal to the Egyptian Government it was as a breastwork to the surging rebellion, for just as an army marching or sailing towards Khartoum could not leave it in adverse hands to the flank or rear, neither could the revolutionary levies advance from an opposite direction into Egypt proper. Equally valuable was the town to those fortunate enough to be in possession.

It need hardly be said, then, that the successful assault of the disloyal tribesmen was a disaster—it cut off Khartoum still more effectually from the outer world, it welded more firmly the band of iron enclosing the city, and entailed precautionary measures and additional labours highly inconvenient and costly that would never, otherwise, have arisen.

CHAPTER XX.

DONGOLA—THE MUDIR, MUSTAPHA BEY—LOYALTY OF THE
DONGOLESE—GRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF THE GOVERNOR
—REPORTS FROM THE DESERT—REVOLT AT DEBBAH—
THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT COMMAND A RETREAT—
ROUT OF THE MAHDISTS—THE MUDIR INVALUABLE—
REINFORCEMENTS ASKED FOR—VICTORY AT MERAWI—
A UNIQUE DESPATCH—NEWS FROM KHARTOUM—SUS-
PICIONS OF THE MUDIR—A LUDICROUS BLUNDER.

SITUATE in the bend of the Nile between Korosko and Abu Hamed, and, from Khartoum, upon its right bank are the two Dongolas, both between the third and fourth cataracts, and, in appearance, insignificant. From Cairo New Dongola, or Ordee, is first reached; Old Dongola being about a day's journey further down the river. With Old Dongola we have little reference. On the other hand, New Dongola, the capital of Lower Nubia, and the Mudir who resided there, were very important factors indeed connected with the Soudan rebellion. Hitherto, New Dongola, or Dongola, as we shall designate the town, has been mentioned in a casual way. It has not come within our purview except that we adverted to the town in an early chapter as being the birthplace of the Mahdi, and, subsequently, as bearing a slight relation to events that followed each other with kaleidoscopic rapidity.

46

Over a thousand miles from Cairo, Dongola had not experienced the shock of Arabi's rebellion; in the very angle of the Nile Gordon and Stewart cut off in their daring ride from Korosko to Wady Halfa, across the arid, lonely Nubian desert, over 200 miles from Khartoum, where the rebellion focussed three years and nine months after its inception, and separated from the city by the great Bayuda desert, through which a solitary camel route wound, altogether out of the line along which the revolt spread on travelling north-east from Khartoum, and entirely away from any route from the Red Sea coast to Khartoum *via* Berber, Dongola was comparatively oblivious to the rude affections sadly experienced by towns in Kordofan, Senaar, Darfur, and the Eastern Soudan.

In an extended raid, however, from the south on Egypt proper, Dongola would have to be reckoned with. It had escaped, thus far, because of its immunity and distance from Khartoum. Had Khartoum not blocked the path of the Mahdi, and had Berber not withstood the attack levelled against it, the probability is that these two centres possessed by the Mahdists, the arc of the Nile formed by its flow between Shendy and Korti, 185 miles, would have been traversed, the Bayuda desert enclosed in this arc over-run, and Dongola soon embraced by the movement. For reinforcements had by no means been pushed forward as far south as Dongola when Khartoum was hemmed in and the loyalists of Berber were gasping their last breath.

But Dongola and its Mudir were only "biding their time"—they were gathering strength to resist the torrent whose fringe ultimately lapped them. Strange that Dongola should be so faithful when the False Prophet was born there, and considering that Mohammed Ahmed's relatives were still resident in the vicinity—singular that faithfulness had a home here at a period when anarchy and outrage held sway in parts that knew not this man,

to whose people he was unknown in person, and whose mission was to them unproclaimed until he secured the kernel of his vast following in the middle of the year 1881.

The secret of the continued adherence of Dongola to the Egyptian cause was unquestionably the firm loyalty of its Mudir. He was a governor among governors, a man who, although not supported by the Egyptian Government in time of threatened distress, prepared to defend his charge to the best of his ability; a man who, commanded to retreat, scorned to turn his back upon the enemy; a man who, in a figurative sense, was signalled to retire, but placed his sightless eye to the glass and vowed, like Nelson, that as he could not observe the instructions he could not obey; a man who, blackened as a traitor and a coward, was steadfast, unwavering, true. Luckily for England and for Egypt that the Mudir of Dongola yielded not to the temptations and the sophistries of the Mahdi, whose birth-place he ruled.

Such an individual should be described, and his antecedents and surroundings should be known. Mr. O'Kelly says of him:—

“Imagine a small, slight, delicate man, with a pale, sad, pensive face, lighted up by two large, black, luminous eyes, which seem to be always looking into space or engaged counting the beads on which good Moslems tell their prayers, and from between which projects a preternaturally large nose, hooked like a vulture's beak, and you will have a vague general notion of the personal appearance of Mustapha Bey Yower, Mudir of Dongola. When he speaks his voice has a low, querulous tone, which seems to reproach the interlocutor with disturbing the pious man in his religious meditations, and as if to emphasise the protest the large black eyes look into space, and the long, thin, white fingers nervously tell bead after bead, while the lips move in silent prayer, as though no mortal were within sight, and the Mudir was prostrated

at some holy shrine. The effect of this extra holiness on the Mussulman population is very marked, and most good Mohammedans are inclined to regard Mustapha Bey Yower as a saint of the first water. This reputation constitutes his great hold on a fanatical population among whom he is a stranger, and has, more than any number of Remington rifles, enabled him to maintain himself in power almost within armstroke of the Mahdi, whom he is by some regarded as aspiring to rival. He spends much of his time at his private house, and is only visible for a short time each day before the public prayers which he never fails to offer at the appointed times. Another peculiarity of Mustapha Bey Yower is that he never sits cross-legged at a public reception. His custom is to receive seated on a cane-bottomed chair placed in a corner of the reception hall. On another chair placed immediately in front of him stands a large Koran open, so that in the intervals of conversation or of work his eyes may rest on some comforting verse of the holy page. While seated in this reception hall he admits to audience, not only his visitors, but the heads of the departments of his province. Here nearly all the public business is transacted. It is said of Mustapha Bey Yower that he never accepts presents or gifts. He has, however, one weakness. He likes to buy at his own price, and few merchants care to haggle with him. All power and authority centre in him. He is Commander-in-Chief of the troops, head of the police, and judge of last resort. He controls the post-office and telegraph, and has an independent treasury from which the troops and all the officials are paid. He is in fact Prince, with more arbitrary and despotic power than most Princes would dare to exercise. The steps by which he reached his present dignity are not very clearly known. Born in Circassia, Mustapha Bey Yower was imported into Egypt at an early age, and sold as a slave to one of the Khedive Ismail's favourite Pashas. From this

condition of servitude he emerged to enter the public service under the protection of his late master, and was at last appointed Governor of Dongola. About the time General Gordon was despatched on his mission to Khartoum Mustapha Bey Yower was dismissed from his position as Mudir and another official sent to replace him. At the moment of his dismissal his fortunes looked black indeed, but he resolved to make a fight, and when the new Mudir arrived with his firman in his pocket Mustapha refused point blank to recognise him. Then, summoning a meeting of the principal inhabitants, he submitted to them a petition which they were requested to sign asking that Mustapha Bey Yower should be retained in office. He subsequently met General Gordon, and obtained from him a telegram to Cairo requesting that he should be retained at his post. During all the time the Mudir appointed by the Cairo Government was living on his steamer, vainly endeavouring to negotiate for his installation in office. This condition of affairs continued several weeks, and as Mustapha refused to surrender, the Government came to the conclusion that they had better give in gracefully. So an order was despatched to the new appointee, directing him to return to Cairo. This incident strengthened enormously Mustapha Bey's influence, and henceforth the people came to regard him as a person ruling by the divine right of force, and too strong even for the Cairo Government to interfere with."

It was in May that the Egyptian Government, believing in the Mudir's loyalty, in spite of rumours to the contrary, forwarded him an instalment of a thousand Remingtons, with ammunition to aid him in stemming the flow of the rebellion, which, as we have seen in the last chapter, had permeated the whole of the district of Berber, and which was spreading northwards to Abu Hamed and westwards along the Nile banks to Dongola. To obtain these arms, the Mudir had to despatch twenty of his troops up the Nile, 100 miles to the north, as far as Wady Halfa, where

down

the outposts of the advanced troops had been commanded to stay in accordance with the decision of the Council of Notables after Nubar Pasha's threatened resignation on hearing that no measures were being instituted for the relief of Berber.

In that month, also, the Mudir became of immense service to the Government in forwarding reports of the condition of the country between Dongola and Khartoum, and in transmitting regularly by telegraph reports as they came to his knowledge concerning the position of General Gordon. He sent out agents to Khartoum about the time the investment began, and on their return he was enabled to inform the Government at once that Khartoum had not fallen. This was in May. Gordon was then attacking the insurgents on the White Nile, where they were constructing shelters, but to be driven out, however. The Mudir's agents had been unable to deliver his letters to Gordon owing to the enormous number of rebels round Khartoum. Then it was that the Mudir despaired of communicating with Gordon, that the alarming news anent Berber was persistent, and that, as a consequence, coupled with the fact that the country south of Debbah on the opposite bank of the Nile to that on which stands Dongola was in open revolt, that the orders reached the Mudir to retire. Mustapha refused, as we have said; he detested "strategic movements to the rear," and so he held on like grim death, met the Mahdists in open conflict at Debbah, routed them, and telegraphed that all had submitted except the Gari of Charkieh and some of his soldiers. This defeat had disengaged Berber, added the Mudir, and, flushed with his victory, he wired that, given soldiers, he could conquer the whole Soudan. The Mahdi sent overtures to him, but he laughed at them, thirsted for more fields to win, and sharpened his trusty sword in anticipation of making short work of legions of rebels. A wonderful man was this Mudir of Dongola—not a Don Quixote, although fond of tilting, and fortunate

in meeting something to tilt at. He reminds us forcibly, though, of that very peculiar individual, the Baron Munchausen.

So when the rebels around Debbah had recovered from the thrashing administered by Mustapha, and they defied him once again, Mustapha, like a genuine patriot that he was, left Dongola behind ; and on the sixth of Ramadan, some time in June, went forth to battle. According to the elaborate calculation of the Oriental mind, the rebels were 13,000 strong, all armed fighting men, and opposed to them were 500 of the Mudir's Bashi-Bazouks. Need it be said that Mustapha was victorious ? Nay, 3,500 bodies were found upon the ensanguined field, and "by God's help," read the announcement of this conflict in the desert, "the soldiers suffered no loss." Extraordinary at first sight, but it must be remembered that if 3,500 rebels were killed without any of them or their 9,500 companions slaughtering their opponents, the Mudir was no ordinary mortal ! This was proved by the context of the announcement making it known that, after he had had a short rest, the Mudir would pursue the rebels, cut off their retreat, and capture their leader, Ahmed El Hudah.

Fire-eater that he was, the Mudir armed the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, raised additional troops, forced all the rich citizens to contribute money for military equipment, kept the strictest watch on anything and everything coming in or going out of Dongola, and—telegraphed to Cairo for additional rifles ! In July, Mustapha left Debbah for Merawi, the extreme limit of his province, in search of glory and honour, taking with him a battalion of those staunch and innocent creatures, the Bashi-Bazouks, 250 regulars, two mountain guns, and 4,000 inhabitants ! Then followed another battle, and another victory, of course ; likewise, a rosy account of the fighting and its results. The translation from the Arabic must be given, else this Crichton of a Mudir and his private secretary will not be properly understood :—"Dongola, July

25th. The rebel sheikh, Ahmed El Hudah, after having passed Debbah and lost several men killed, went to Ehhatini, in the Ambukol district, where are extensive ruins and high mountains. There he made a rampart surrounded with ditches, and, having collected the rest of his men, he prepared for battle. When the Mudir here heard of this he went out to attack the enemy, with two battalions of Bashi-Bazouks, two companies of infantry, two mountain guns, and 4,000 armed volunteers from the inhabitants of the province. On his arrival at the enemy's position a battle was fought, and, thanks to God, and the good precautions of the Mudir, a victory was gained by the Khedive's soldiers. About 300 rebels were killed, besides many wounded. The sheikh El Hudah fled with his remaining partisans, but the Mudir pursued him till he compelled him to cross the frontier of his province and enter into the province of Berber, after which the Mudir left all the Khedive's soldiers at the pass of Elahmour, at the extremity of the province of Dongola, which now, praise be to God, is actually safe and tranquil. The Mudir returned here yesterday. A letter has arrived from Gordon at Khartoum, to the Mudir, who is still waiting a reply."

The letter purporting to be from Khartoum, which, like the Mudir's despatches, must be read *cum grano salis*, was as follows:—"Khartoum and Senaar are holding out. Give the bearer, Mahmoud Achmed, all the news of the expedition. State numbers to be sent. Surrounding Khartoum there are 16,000 men—5,000 on the Blue Nile, 5,000 at Gereif, 3,000 at Sejeret Mahahed, and 3,000 at Omdurman under Mustapha." The intelligence was added that General Gordon had, with the help of three steamers and a part of the garrison, seized 5,000 quarters of maize from about 11,000 of the rebels, that Gordon's men had waited till the rebels' ammunition was finished and then landed, thoroughly routed the enemy, and carried off the maize.

Yet for all this the Mudir's loyalty was doubted—he was esteemed a myth by not a few, the telegraphic messages from Dongola were pronounced spurious, and the generally accepted story was that Mustapha had joined the rebels, and that they were holding the town, the messages having been forwarded to inveigle the Egyptians or English into a carefully-laid trap. Writing on the 31st July from Assouan, whence no Egyptian had ventured south to test the accuracy or otherwise of the telegraphic messages and the bazaar rumours, one correspondent asserted that Colonel Taylor had started, or was about starting, south to learn the exact truth as to how far north the Arabs had penetrated. “The Mudir of Dongola, or whoever is now in power there,” continued the correspondent, “keeps up the fiction that the Mudir and town are still loyal to the Government, but at the same time exhibits complete contempt for the orders sent by the Government, as well as to the request for information sent by agents of the Government. I am convinced that the town and troops have gone over to the insurgents! The capture of Dongola and Berber has been a good stroke of business for the rebels. In the latter town they secured some £80,000 sterling, part of the money supplied for General Gordon, but which never reached Khartoum. In addition, they came into possession of 3,000 Remington rifles and some artillery. There is a dispute about the number of guns, some alleging there were twenty pieces, while others stoutly maintain there were only two. At Dongola, also, they must have been able to replenish their treasury, as Dongola is one of the richest of the Mudiriehs south of Assouan. Here, also, they will have come into possession of something like 3,000 Remingtons, including 1,000 rifles and 400,000 cartridges, which the Government were good enough to send up lately. In addition to those modern arms, there is a store of muzzle-loading, old-pattern guns, and a considerable supply of double-barrelled guns, with bayonets, which were taken from the slave

merchants some years ago. Then there were four mountain howitzers, three of them rifled, and a mitrailleuse lately sent up by the Government," &c., &c.

In truth, the Mudir had given battle to the rebels four times. On one occasion he had stood between the two conflicting bodies with a stick in his hand, encouraging his men and telling them not to be afraid; and, according to the story to the more superstitious among his followers—a gentleman travelling in Egypt at the time wrote—he amused himself by catching the bullets of the rebels, and did great execution by throwing them back. (?) At all events, his men behaved very steadily, and did great execution with their Remingtons, an artillery officer using his guns with great effect, "each shot seeming to tear a regular lane through the crowd!" The houses of the insurgents were destroyed for many miles along the Nile banks in the direction of Merawi, and everywhere the Mudir was feared.

"Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise," "Give a dog a bad name," and so on. Little did the Mudir of Dongola suppose that his fealty was being questioned while he was hotly pursuing and scattering the rebels, and that his character was being slandered to the degree it was. Providing Lord Wolseley, who invested him in the following January with the order of K.C.M.G. in token of the high appreciation of his services to the Government, had so honoured him as some recompense for defamation of character—unwittingly committed, of course—his reward was merited.

However, the time came when Mustapha Bey, Mudir of Dongola, was no longer a "suspect."

Admiral Hewitt having been despatched to the court of King John of Abyssinia, whose country lies to the south-east of the Soudan, to secure the friendship of His Majesty in view of possible contingencies arising out of Mahdist designs against the gallant soldiers at Kassala in the south of the Eastern Soudan, Massowah, on the borders of his

territory, and other places, Major Kitchener was ordered on a somewhat perilous mission, namely, to scour the country between the Nile and the northern portion of the Eastern Soudan for the purpose of learning the real condition of affairs. Accompanied by a strong force of Arabs, Major Kitchener left Korosko, went to the north, then to the east, and afterwards to the south, gaining at every point much valuable information. He penetrated south and south-west to Dongola, not knowing whether he was journeying to certain destruction, where he arrived on the 1st August, to find, to his great delight and that of the Government, that the Mudir was really loyal, and that the garrison and populace were devoted to the Egyptian cause. At Dongola Major Kitchener was very well received, but the irrepressible Mudir was soon telling him of his fondness for meeting the rebels, and sustaining the claims of the Government by urging that had he 7,000 men he could open up the Soudan and relieve Gordon. Mustapha was also eager that the Major should remain with him for some time, and the request was not refused; indeed, Major Kitchener continued his inspection along the banks of the Nile, with Dongola as his headquarters. Here favourable opportunities presented themselves for despatching messengers across the desert to the neighbourhood of Khartoum; and having confidence in the Mudir and his runners, Major Kitchener was not long in utilising them for so laudable a purpose.

The Mudir could not stay, however, at Dongola to await the return of messengers—he must perforce go out to vanquish and to telegraph of complete victories. In this spirit he went forth yet again, and soon the telegraph wires were working from Debbah with the message, dated Sept. 9th, that he had met the rebel hosts from Kordofan and Berber, who had sustained a crushing defeat at Korti, near Ambukol. After the fight the dead bodies of Ahmed Alai, chief of the rebels, the so-called Emir of Dongola, and the Emirs appointed to Tripoli, Cairo, Kenah, Egneh,

and Assouan were found. He need not mention, the Mudir went on to say, that the rebels were in vast numbers, whereas his soldiers were few; nevertheless they had slain a great proportion of the enemy. The province, and for some distance south, was now safe for travelling, for which he offered his usual thanks. Major Kitchener had wished to be present at the fight, but he had not permitted him! Perchance Major Kitchener was content to trust the Dongolese, especially when they were so warlike that if they did not exist on spears they were so extremely fond of them that a Dongolian could not, we are told, shave a customer unless he held a spear in one hand and his razor in the other. Distinguished fellows, very, were the Mudir and his gallant, "merrie" charges.

Prior to the battle in which the Emirs suffered so heavily, the Mudir had a pleasant surprise for those whose scepticism was not too strong to allow of them accepting all he chose to telegraph. It was that he had received another letter from Gordon. On being forwarded to Cairo it was found that the missive was written in Arabic, on a tiny scrap of paper, and signed in English. The Mudir further telegraphed the alleged contents of a second letter from the noble defender of Khartoum, dated the 20th July, and written in Arabic: "Khartoum all right. Soldiers and all others well. Necessary to hear news from you." Then in English, "Khartoum all right." The letter was duly signed and sealed. The Mudir added that Gordon had sent five letters for the people of Cairo—the purpose was not very clear—and that a messenger had returned to Dongola, and stated that instead of the Mahdi being in the neighbourhood of Khartoum he was at El Obeid dealing with some internecine troubles.

Discussing these messages purporting to come from Gordon through the Mudir of Dongola—impressions of whom were not yet of a flattering character—a prevalent belief was that they were not genuine. The first Gordon

letter appeared to everyone who examined it at Cairo, authentic, but later on suspicion was engendered when it was stated that Gordon, when he passed through the city, did not remain long enough to have a seal made. A seal was sent after him, but there had been an absence of any notification that the object had arrived at its destination. The notion was that the name on the letters to the Mudir of Dongola was an impression—possibly from the stolen seal—and not handwriting, because of the signature being out of proportion to the paper used. Another cause of doubt was, that although able, on the surface, to write to the Mudir of Dongola, General Gordon did not send letters to his friends. It was noted, likewise, that the General wrote in Arabic, and asked questions, replies to which would be of great value to the rebels.

The inference of all this was, that supposing Gordon had endeavoured to communicate with the outside world his plans had been defeated by the Mahdi's levies capturing the messengers, and withholding letters as they served his purpose, and that the False Prophet was utilising Gordon's seal.

To summarise, the minds of individuals, and of parties in the State, were sorely perplexed. One or more of the letters reputed to come from our Envoy at Khartoum might be genuine—equally probable was it that they were fictitious. And so the nation did not know in the month of August whether its hero was alive or dead, whether Khartoum was governed for the Egyptians, or whether the followers of the Mahdi were walking its thoroughfares. This alone was certain, that Gordon alive, he must be extricated from a situation of imminent peril, and that by a military expedition. Gordon dead and Khartoum fallen—well, no one could prophesy what course the British Government would adopt. That the task of rescue could be assigned to no other Power than England, was freely acknowledged. The Government had commissioned Gor-

don; neither Mr Gladstone nor his colleagues had denied their responsibility, the nation was proud to admit Gordon as the special agent of England, and, apart from other considerations, England was morally bound to secure his safe return should life be given to him on her soldiers reaching Khartoum.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND KHARTOUM.—VOTE OF CREDIT
—MOVEMENT OF TROOPS IN EGYPT—GENERAL STEPHEN-
SON—PROCEEDINGS IN PARLIAMENT—RELIEF EXPEDI-
TION DECIDED UPON—MESSAGES FROM GORDON—
ROUTES TO KHARTOUM—LORD WOLSELEY TO COMMAND
THE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE—INSTRUCTIONS TO HIS
LORDSHIP—ADVANCE OF THE BRITISH—FIGHTING AT
KHARTOUM—NEWS FROM THE CITY—GORDON STILL
ALIVE.

WHISPERINGS there had been that the members of the British Cabinet found themselves obliged, by the force of public opinion and the responsibility thrust upon them, to institute a Khartoum Relief Expedition, but it was not until the 6th August that the intention of the Government was really placed beyond all doubt. Even then there was no surety that an expedition would be despatched.

However, on the date named, the House of Commons was in Committee of Supply. Mr. Gladstone then rose and “asked for a vote of credit for £300,000, which might become necessary for the relief of General Gordon,” and this having been submitted from the chair, the Premier went on to state that the Government were under pledges to aid the General by military means in certain contingencies. Those pledges were approved by the sense of Parliament. The Ministry had been in a state of great

embarrassment from the want of direct official communication with General Gordon—a series of reports had reached them, though they had not been altogether uniform in character, but the general conclusion arrived at was that the members of the Government were not in a position to say that the contingency anticipated as to the necessity of sending military aid with the view of relieving General Gordon had arrived, but Parliament was about to be prorogued, and the Government thought it their duty to place themselves in such a position that if the contingency should arise, they might be able to meet it in a way that Parliament might wish. The vote was one rather of principle than anything else.

So popular was the vote that, after a comparatively brief discussion, it was carried by 174 votes to 14, amid hearty cheers, and to the intense satisfaction of the majority in the country.

On that very day Mr. Egerton had telegraphed that owing to the action of Mustapha, who, though ordered to retire, had inflicted a defeat on the rebels, and thus temporarily arrested their advance, to the letter received by him from General Gordon, and the necessity under which the Mudir felt, failing reinforcements, of abandoning Dongola, he was left with the conviction that part of the defending force of Egypt would be best employed in moving south, together with the irregulars, beyond the cataracts, with a view of giving a hand to Gordon, for escape *via* Debbah and Dongola. But the Nile would soon be high, and the time was short within which any river expedition was possible; it was, therefore, imperative it should take place at once, or not at all. Mr. Egerton submitted that English troops should be moved beyond the cataracts from Egypt as a means of coming into communication, either directly or through irregulars, with Khartoum, for, as regarded Egypt itself, he had no apprehension so long as the danger of the approach of the rebellion was removed.

684

On the 8th August, supported by the nation and the vote of credit, Lord Hartington (the British War Secretary) telegraphed to Lieutenant-General Stephenson in a vein which proved that the Government had definitely resolved to leave nothing short but formal permission for the launching of an expedition for the relief of Khartoum. The movement could scarcely fail, wired Lord Hartington, to afford the means of obtaining, in the first instance, full and accurate information as to the position and intentions of General Gordon, and it was probable that such a demonstration would in itself be sufficient to strengthen his position and to secure the co-operation of the tribes which had not joined the Mahdi to such an extent as to enable General Gordon to secure the principal object of his mission. But General Stephenson had a decided objection to commanding an expedition to proceed along the Nile, as was resolved upon by the Government before the 15th August. He was candid enough to express his opinion that to conduct a flotilla of small boats along the bosom of the Nile to Dongola was impracticable, a belief which cost him a command, for the Government forthwith appointed Lord Wolseley to the chief military office in Egypt. His lordship saw the feasibility of leading an expedition up the Nile to Dongola—his Red River experiences had taught him much—and he approved of it rather than the route from Suakim to Berber. Her Majesty's Government had been confirmed in their conviction, wrote Lord Granville to Mr. Egerton on August 15th, that the advice it was their duty to give to the Khedive to retire from the Soudan was wise and necessary, and they had no intention of re-opening the question. With the imperfect knowledge then in their possession they were unable to lay down any plan in detail for the settlement of the Eastern Soudan. They did not, however, wish to exclude the consideration of such questions as whether some native chiefs might not be found who might be recognised as independent rulers

of the country, such men receiving annual payments from Egypt on condition of their being friendly and encouraging trade, as was proposed by General Gordon in respect to Zebehr Pasha.

To confine our attention for the present to the expedition. "A battle of routes" waged for some time, many authorities urging the Suakim-Berber way, while others contended for the Nile Valley. The dangers attending the passage of the cataracts—which, when the Nile is low, are simply barriers, and when high extremely dangerous—was admitted even by those who favoured the Nile route. Between Cairo and Khartoum there are six of these cataracts, the first near Assouan, 500 miles from the Egyptian capital, the second in the vicinity of Wady Halfa, the third some fifty miles further up the Nile, the fourth at Hamdab, the fifth on the approach to Berber, and the sixth between Shendy and Khartoum. So serious an obstacle had the first cataract been regarded that a railway seven miles in length had been constructed, and by this goods were conveyed from the Lower Nile boats of superior draught at Assouan to the lesser Upper Nile boats at Philæ. From Philæ to Korosko is a stretch of river of 111 miles, and at this point the Nile could be left, as we have previously stated, until Abu Hamed is struck, after traversing 230 miles of desert; but water is exceedingly scarce here. Camels cannot make the journey in less than eight or ten days; the country is barren, and the passage of a large body of men is fraught with multifarious risks. To adopt this route would mean embarkation and disembarkation, enormous expenditure, toil, and difficulties, so that the Nile route adopted at all, the whole stretch of water must be followed from Korosko to Abu Hamed, notwithstanding that a distance of 500 miles would otherwise be saved. Then it cannot be forgotten that to cross the Lower Nubian desert would be to discard Dongola, Debbah, Ambukol, Korti, Hamdab, and Kerbikan. Of course, passing boats along the Nile is

labour indescribable, and another grave objection pressed against the Nile route was that six months must be consumed in covering the distance from Lower Egypt to Khartoum, with a corresponding pecuniary outlay. A serious consideration was: Could Gordon resist the Mahdists around Khartoum for this space of time? Accepting that the communications recorded by the Mudir of Dongola were genuine, the defender of Khartoum had intimated that he could "hold on" till November, and, as Major Kitchener telegraphed from Dongola, Gordon would spare no effort to hold out longer in case he was certain English troops were coming to his relief.

There was another point greatly in favour of the Nile route also, namely, for a distance of 1,250 miles, at any rate, our troops would pass through a friendly country, while to start from Suakim now would necessitate "smashing up" Osman Digna immediately a landing had been effected. What period such an operation would entail it was impossible to predict, because Osman had become a power again in the Eastern Soudan. We had thrashed him soundly at El Teb and Tamai a few months previously, but the Government having acted on their decision to withdraw all the British military and naval force after the second dispersal of the rebels, except two regiments of infantry and a number of marines to defend the port and its surroundings, a numerous following had again gathered under Osman's banners, and constituted a menace to a body of troops marching on Berber. Moreover, the strength of the insurgents among the rocks and valleys between Suakim and Berber could not be gauged, and it might be that to start from the Red Sea coast inland would result in inability to maintain a line of communications, leaving a sufficient number of troops as the advance column to fight at Abu Ahmed, Berber, and away up the Nile to Khartoum.

Another material consideration was the supply of water, which could be obtained in plenty by the Nile route, but

through the rugged country lying between Suakim and Berber the wells are scarce and the liquid of indifferent quality. The construction of a railway was to obviate all the terrible inconveniences of a march from Suakim to Berber, but this work, it was allowed, would occupy months, and necessitate an outlay of a million sterling.

Just one word more. One who had travelled with Lord Wolseley's expeditionary force wrote from Korti more than a month after the fall of Khartoum: Supposing that we had reached Berber from Suakim at the end of January—which we should probably not have done—and found that Khartoum had fallen, what would have been the position of affairs? In a month, or less, there being nothing to stop him, the Mahdi would have overrun the province of Dongola; the Mudir's head would have been stuck on a lance and carried about the country as an inducement to the Arabs to believe and to follow Mohammed Ahmed, who could easily have penetrated to Wady Halfa and thence even to Assouan, for all the tribes would most assuredly have thrown in their lot with him. All the Bishareen, Kabbabish, Ababdeh, &c., now either loyal or merely neutral, would then have become violent Mahdists, and a rising in Assouan would almost certainly have been quickly followed by a revolution in Egypt. All this must have happened had Her Majesty's Government listened to the advice of those who insisted that the only safe and proper route for this expedition was by Suakim and Berber.

Our purpose is not, however, to deal at length with the merits and demerits of the routes. Were we to do so, pages might easily be covered, and even then arguments *pro* and *con*. would remain. Both lines were, and are, at the season we write, extremely difficult. It was freely admitted months would elapse ere Khartoum was sighted, and that £2,000,000 or £3,000,000 would scarcely suffice to meet the expenditure.

The Nile route having been selected by the Government,

preparations on the scale required were begun. In the first instance the idea was that as no opposition would be encountered on the Cairo side of Korti or Merawi, a flying column of 3,500 picked men would do the work. Then a force of 5,800 was spoken of, and this number was eventually increased to some 7,000 all told, and orders were issued for about a thousand boats on the principle of those utilised in Lord Wolseley's Red River expedition, to be rowed, the majority of them by Canadian voyageurs engaged across the broad Atlantic. The craft were from 24ft. to 30ft. long, with a beam of some 6ft. 6in. and a depth of 2ft. 6in., with about eight or ten oars, the whole weight being about ten hundredweight. To each boat, also, was allocated two boat-hooks, or hitchers, six poles for propelling over shallows and rapids, and three stout rollers for helping the boats overland. Each boat was fitted with two long sails, which could be worked reefed, so as to permit an awning to be fitted underneath for the protection of the men from the sun. Further, each craft was laden with supplies of food and ammunition, stowed away in the bottom, leaving space for a dozen men to sit and navigate the craft, besides finding room among the packages for the rifles and essentials of the journey. There were craft entirely relegated for stores and reserves, and elaborate arrangements were made in other respects for the completion of a scheme thoroughly unique—it may be said, almost unprecedented.

Every branch of the service was represented—Life Guards, Dragoon Guards, Royal Dragoons, Scots Greys, Lancers, Hussars, Mounted Infantry, Artillery, Infantry of the Line—the Royal Sussex, Staffordshire, Essex, Kent, Connaught Rangers, Rifles, Black Watch, Cornwall—Sailors and Marines. A plan was elaborated for constituting a camel corps, mainly of cavalry men—all that judgment, experience and foresight could suggest was provided. The boats were to be conveyed by sea and land to Sarrass near Wady Halfa, and

the second cataract, so as to minimise the toils of a river journey and hasten the movements of the expedition. It was likewise pretty well understood that the Nile would not be followed right away to Khartoum from Sarrass, but that head-quarters would be formed at a point between Dongola and Merawi and a march across the Bayuda Desert inaugurated. But more of this anon.

August 27th was the date on which Lord Wolseley was appointed to the "temporary" command of the Gordon Relief Expedition. On the 11th September, he was at Cairo, having travelled overland in company with Lord Northbrook, instructed by the Government to proceed to Egypt to make inquiries into the financial affairs of the country, wherein England was so largely concerned. The European Conference had then been adjourned *sine die*, without accepting the proposals laid by the Powers before the representatives. It was soon evident that Lord Wolseley's "temporary command" meant something more than the phrase indicates. He was, in fact, installed Commander-in-Chief of the Khartoum Relief Expedition, and was to traverse the Nile Valley in supreme charge with the expedition. General Wood was already at Assouan, and Generals Earle, Herbert Stewart, and Buller were with his lordship.

At Cairo—which he left with his staff on the 29th September—Lord Wolseley received, as Gordon had done, his instructions as to the course he should pursue in connection with the affairs of the Soudan. The primary object of the Expedition, the British Government informed him, was to bring away General Gordon and Colonel Stewart from Khartoum. When that object had been secured no further offensive operations of any kind were to be undertaken. Although he was not precluded from advancing as far as Khartoum, should he consider such a step essential to insure the safe retreat of General Gordon and Colonel Stewart, he should bear in mind that Her Majesty's Government were desirous to limit the

sphere of his military operations as much as possible. They relied on him, therefore, not to advance further southwards than was absolutely necessary in order to obtain the primary object of the expedition. "You will endeavour," the instructions set forth, "to place yourself in communication with General Gordon and Colonel Stewart as soon as possible. In respect to all political matters you will communicate with Her Majesty's Government, and receive their instructions through the Consul General at Cairo. You are aware that the policy of Her Majesty's Government is that Egyptian rule in the Soudan should cease. It is desirable that you should receive general instructions as to two points which necessarily arise in connection with the method of carrying this policy into execution. These are (1) the steps to be taken to insure the safe retreat of the Egyptian troops and civil employés; (2) the policy to be adopted in respect to the future government of the Soudan, and especially of Khartoum. The negotiations with the tribes for endeavouring to secure the safe retreat of the garrison of Kassala may most conveniently be treated from Suakim and Massowah. You need not, therefore, take any steps in connection with this branch of the subject. The positions of the garrisons in Darfour, the Bahr-el-Gazelle, and Equatorial provinces renders it impossible that you should take any action which would facilitate their retreat without extending your operations far beyond the sphere which Her Majesty's Government is prepared to sanction. As regards the Sennaar garrison, Her Majesty's Government is not prepared to sanction the despatch of an expedition of British troops up the Blue Nile in order to insure its retreat. From the last telegrams received from General Gordon there is reason to hope that he has already taken steps to withdraw the Egyptian portion of the Sennaar garrison. You will use your best endeavours to insure the safe retreat of the Egyptian troops which constitute the Khartoum garrison,

and of such of the civil employés of Khartoum, together with their families, as may wish to return to Egypt. As regards the future government of the Soudan, and especially of Khartoum, Her Majesty's Government would be glad to see a Government at Khartoum, which, so far as all matters connected with the internal administration of the country are concerned, would be wholly independent of Egypt. The Egyptian Government would be prepared to pay a reasonable subsidy to any chief or number of chiefs, who would be sufficiently powerful to maintain order along the valley of the Nile from Wady Halfa to Khartoum, and who would agree to the following conditions:—1. To remain at peace with Egypt, and to repress any raids on Egyptian territory. 2. To encourage trade with Egypt. 3. To prevent and discourage by all possible means any expedition for the sale of and capture of slaves." Lord Wolseley was authorised to conclude any arrangements which fulfilled these general conditions. He was to bear in mind that any ruler established south of Wady Halfa would have to rely solely on his own strength in order to maintain his position, though under certain conditions the Egyptian Government was prepared to pay the moderate subsidy in order to secure the tranquillity and good government of the Nile valley.

Meanwhile the British troops were conveyed in detachments along the Nile Valley, the boating difficulties beyond Sarrass being met unflinchingly and with that fortitude the British are capable of enduring, all being imbued also with the one thought that apart from going where duty called them, the enterprise was for the relief of him whom their country esteemed with intense affection. All doubts were removed, too, as to Gordon being alive, trustworthy messengers having reached Ambukol and Dongola with despatches showing that not only was our Envoy living and well, but that he had inflicted most serious defeats upon the enemy. This intelligence begot widespread confidence in the success of the expedition, it

pointed clearly to the probability that fighting in the desert would be at a discount in case Gordon could by an almost superhuman effort prevent the rebels from seizing Khartoum, either by an overwhelming attack or by having reduced the garrison to starvation, and the fears of many that the expeditionary force was quite inadequate in numbers to the work that would be required of them were considerably allayed.

It is true that General Gordon had written, under date July 13th, that he could hold out for not more than four months; but intelligence continuing to arrive that he had inflicted serious losses upon the Mahdi's followers, and that he had re-opened communication with Senaar, where supplies were plentiful, the fond anticipation was that the Expedition would yet reach Khartoum ere the city succumbed. A rumour there was that gained in persistency, that went to becloud the happy auguries that had presented themselves, and it was that Colonel Stewart, Mr. Power, and a steamer's crew had been wrecked in the neighbourhood of Merawi, 360 miles from Khartoum, while on their way to Egypt proper, *via* Dongola, and that after being cruelly betrayed they were foully murdered. Originally the report was disbelieved, as it was remembered the insurgents were in possession of the river banks away from Khartoum to Shendy, thence to Berber and Abu Hamed, a distance of 350 miles, a route the steamer would have to take in order to arrive at Merawi, or Salamet, as the place was more strictly described, where the tragedy had occurred. However, circumstantial accounts were not to be denied, and eventually the conviction found lodgment that Stewart, Power, and others were victims of relentless treachery, especially when taken in conjunction with stories that Berber had been re-captured by Gordon or Stewart, and that the Nile was, to a degree, less closely over-run by the rebel hordes.

1884 The 29th September was a bright and eventful day for

the thousand upon thousands of anxious hearts in England and, we may say, in other quarters of the civilised world. It is a day that will for years be remembered as that on which the first connected and absolutely reliable account was published of how the besieged in Khartoum had fared since that sorrowful period had begun during which Gordon and those who owned allegiance to him had been completely shut out from the wide, wide world. Not during those weary months, intervening from the 19th April to this 29th September, but carrying our minds to the 29th July, astounding us with the recitals of extraordinary feats, amazing us with some idea of the surpassing power and genius of the noble-hearted defender of the city in the desert, and deeply impressing us with the might and energy of a Christian soldier thrown back upon his own resources, to be conjured up under circumstances never, surely, enveloping individual or community since man was created upon the earth. Need it be said that we refer to the letter of Mr. Power as it appeared in the *Times*?—one of several, perhaps, but which never reached their destination. This had not been forwarded by the route taking in Dongola, but had been carried by a trusty messenger along paths less frequented, and through difficulties of a kind it would be impossible to define, for Mr. Power's communication had been two months on the journey. It had been carried to Massowah—from the south of Khartoum, along the Blue Nile for a distance of 120 miles, perhaps to Abu Harrez, thence through Kadarif, across the Atbara, through the rocky defiles on the borders of Abyssinia, past Kassala—still loyal to the Government notwithstanding an investment as close as that of Khartoum—and so on to the seaport at the southern extremity of the Eastern Soudan.

Supplemented as the letter was by communications direct from Gordon, which likewise had been greatly delayed in transmission, much that was valuable and highly interesting was laid before the country, tending,

nevertheless, to increase public anxiety, and to beget painful speculation as to whether the Nile Valley Relief Expedition would, after all, reach its goal to be of service to the city and the precious lives within.

We must return, however, to Khartoum as it was when first closely besieged upon every side, knit together fragmentary records and present them *en bloc* as they relate to those terribly weary months when Gordon's fellow-countrymen were in densest ignorance of him and of the thousands of human beings dependent upon him for hourly sustenance.

CHAPTER XXII.

LIFE AT KHARTOUM—GORDON'S ENGINES OF DESTRUCTION—
—RISING OF THE NILE—OPERATIONS AT MESSELE-
MIAH—VICTORY BY THE MAHDISTS—"ARTS OF PEACE"
—DRAUGHT OF MONEY—MEDALS STRUCK—COLONEL
STEWART WOUNDED—HOPE ABANDONED—COWARDICE—
GORDON'S ARMED STEAMERS—SUCCESSSES ON THE BLUE
NILE—SENAAR—SCATHING LETTER—ANOTHER MES-
SAGE FROM GORDON—DESPAIRING CRY—BRITISH
TROOPS AND ZEBEHR AGAIN ASKED FOR—"ON TEN-
TER-HOOKS OF ANXIETY"—WEARY OF DELAY—COL-
ONEL STEWART LEAVES KHARTOUM—SHENDY AND
BERBER ATTACKED—MASSACRE OF STEWART'S PARTY.

THE last intelligence received from Khartoum prior to the severance of the telegraph wire and the complete investment of the city was, it will be remembered, dated the 15th April, 1884, noting to Sir Samuel Baker that there were provisions for five months, and suggesting an appeal to the millionaires of England and America for the raising of £200,000 wherewith to relieve Khartoum by Turkish troops, the English Government having finally declined Gordon's request for soldiers *via* Suakim and Berber.

At that date the General was preparing to execute the plans he intended should rid him of the hated presence of the besieging force. He had constructed mines beneath the ground upon which a portion of the Mahdi' army was

encamped, and about the 20th April the first of them was exploded, resulting in the utmost consternation among the insurgents and very serious loss of life. On the 22nd of April, wrote Gordon in one of his despatches, a lieutenant and two soldiers escaped from the rebels, but they brought no news of import, though a spy returned with the news that Shendy was besieged. Providing the town were taken, Gordon continued, it would be entirely due to the British Government not sending Zebehr—"if it was justifiable to allow him to raise blacks and herd them down to the slaughter of Trinkitat, it would have been equally so to allow him to collect them for the Soudan." On this day Gordon's steamer was attacked by the rebels, but he drove them back with loss, and captured three camels and thirty goats. In the rebel camp were rumours of Abyssinian advances, rumours which came to the ears of Gordon, but he trusted, for the honour of England, they were not correct, "for what has Abyssinia to do with this question? It is like a big boy getting a little boy to fight his battles."

The Nile began to rise in advance of the usual period, and Gordon consoled himself with the reflection that it would enable his steamers to destroy the irrigating machines of the rebels along the river bank, and thus prevent cultivation of food for them. To add to the bulk of the river, thunderstorms arose in all directions, rain fell on successive days, and it appeared that, if the rising of the Nile would serve him, Gordon was to have his desire. On the 24th April a report was conveyed into Khartoum that another expedition had started, with thirty of the soldiers formerly belonging to Hicks's army, with rockets and guns from Obeid, against Saleh Pasha at Messelemiah, that the regular soldiers had feigned an attack on Saleh and turned on the rebels, going over to the Egyptian Governor with the guns; and in this report, again, Gordon found some comfort. He was soon engaged, however, with the Mahdi once more, owing to an attack

on Omdurman, quite near to Khartoum, and to insurgents firing upon his palace. Then he commissioned steamers to proceed up the White Nile, where they captured a number of animals and killed several revolutionists. He sent out negroes to entice the slaves of the Mahdi to come into Khartoum on promise of freedom, intending to enrol them in the Government service, and to give them liberty, clothes, and pay. Gordon hoped also that it might be the end of slave-holding in the neighbourhood, that by degrees, as the negroes appreciated the change in their position, their brethren yet with the False Prophet would strike for freedom and against the whole system of slavery. As we know, Gordon's anticipations were not realised. Neither were those respecting the safety of Saleh, the Pasha ultimately succumbing to the rebel attacks.

There were arts of peace in Khartoum, amid the pervading gloom over the country for miles around. The treasure at Berber had not reached the city, but Gordon issued paper money to the amount of £26,000, and borrowed £50,000 from the rich, which the merchants accepted in the good faith in which it was bestowed, paid all the soldiers in a like manner, made decorations for the defence of Khartoum, a crescent and a star, with words from the Koran inscribed upon them—to the officers silver, to the men silver gilt, and to the women and children pewter. As food had already become very dear, the bank-notes were most opportune, and the dissatisfied expressions of the soldiery because of the arrears of pay were stopped. The general hopefulness was further augmented by news that Slatin Bey was still holding out at Darfur, that Seyid Mahomet Osman had beaten the rebels around Kassala, and that the Seyid wished Gordon to be of good heart and he and all his men would come to the relief of Khartoum. On the other hand, the Arabs were in poor heart, and as the Blue Nile continued to rise, it was hoped that in ten or fifteen days the steamers would be able to "smite them hip and thigh."

The health of the town was excellent, the three Englishmen were well and in good spirits, and so minutely had the defences of Khartoum been secured that around the lines, in addition to all other obstacles, "such as crow's-feet, broken glass, wire entanglements, and *chevaux de frise*, three lines of land torpedoes, or percussion mines," had been constructed. Unluckily, one of these mines occasioned disaster among the very people who laid them, the officer commanding the engineers treading upon one made up of nearly 80lbs. of powder, and was in consequence, with six soldiers, blown to pieces. On the 6th May came a heavy attack from the Arabs at the Blue Nile, at the end of the works, but the rebels were defeated, and they sustained great loss of life from mines placed at Buri; while on the day following a renewed attack was opened from a village, where nine of those terrible mines Gordon had invented burst with such deadly effect that over a hundred of the insurgents were killed outright. With two splendidly-delivered shots from a Krupp 20-pounder at the palace, Colonel Stewart drove the rebels out of their main position, and though during the night the revolutionists loop-holed the walls, they were driven out after holding the place for three days. On subsequent days also the fire of the Mahdists was returned with interest. Steamer expeditions along the Blue and White Niles were signals for sustained firing from Mohammed's followers, the loyalists suffering but slightly, the wounded including, however, Colonel Stewart, wounded in the arm, but he recovered speedily, and was again the same active, gallant, fearless Stewart that he had so often proved himself to be. June was a busy month also, the rebels sustaining discomfiting punishment, losing, at the same time, many head of cattle and two hundred, at least, of their number in attacks on their villages and exposed positions.

On the last day of July Mr. Power dated a message characterised by a touching admixture of calm resigna-

tion, yet one tinged with apparent despair. He had, with Gordon, Stewart, the garrison and the populace, looked, but looked in vain, for the coming of relief. No rumour, even, was there that an Expedition had started either from Suakim or Cairo, no word that the Government had relented and despatched Zebehr. They had heard, indeed, that Berber had fallen, and they knew from this that relief, supposing any was approaching of which they were ignorant, a serious delay in its approach must, perforce, be the consequence.

1884 So on the 30th July Mr. Power completed that message which did not reach England until the 31st September. He said that was the end of the fifth month of the siege; that since March 17th no day had passed without firing, yet on the outside the loss to Gordon had not been more than 700 men killed. They had had a good many wounded, but, as a rule, the wounds were slight. All hope of relief by the Government had gone, so when the provisions, which could only last for two months, were eaten Khartoum must fall. Nor was there any chance, with the soldiers they had and the great crowd of women and children, of their being able to cut their way through the Arabs. There was not steamers for all, and it was only from the vessels that they could meet the rebels. One Arab horseman was enough to put 200 of the bulk of the garrison to flight. Saati Bey, who had done capital service in command of steamers, had been killed, and on that day eight men with spears charged 200 of Gordon's troops armed with Remingtons. The soldiers fled at once, leaving Saati and his vakeel to be murdered. A black officer cut down three of the Arabs, the other five chased the men, and a horseman coming up rode through the flying mass, cutting down seven. Colonel Stewart, who was unarmed, escaped by a miracle, the Arabs not having seen him. With such men as these, Mr. Power plaintively remarked, they could do nothing—the negroes were the only men that could be depended upon. An

attack made by the Soudini troops on the 28th had been very successful; the Arab loss must have been exceedingly heavy. As General Gordon had forbidden the soldiers to bring in the heads of the rebels they killed it was hard to know the exact number. On that day, however, the loyalists had captured sixteen shells and cartouches for a mountain gun, a quantity of rifle ammunition, seventy-eight Remingtons, a number of elephant and other rifles, nearly 200 lances, 60 swords, and some horses, the loss to the garrison being four men killed and some wounded. This action had cleared away the rebels, who day and night had been firing into the lines at Buri, on the Blue Nile. The following day a flotilla of five armoured steamers and four armoured barges with castles upon them went up to Gareff, on the Blue Nile. On the way up they cleared thirteen small forts, but at Gareff the men found two large, strong forts—earthworks rivetted with trunks of palm-trees. There were two cannon in one. For eight hours Gordon's men engaged these forts, and with the Krupp 20-pounder disabled their two cannons. The Arab fire was terrific, but, owing to the bullet-proof armour upon all the vessels, the loss was only three killed and twelve or thirteen wounded. Towards the evening they drove the rebels, who were in great numbers, out of the forts. In three days General Gordon was to send two steamers towards Senaar, when, it was anticipated, a steamer captured from Saleh would be recovered.

General Gordon wrote to Sir E. Baring and Nubar Pasha, July 30th, that the Nile was then high, and that he hoped to clear the route to Senaar in a few days. The hostilities were far from being sought for by him, but there was no option, for retreat was impossible unless they abandoned the civil employés and their families. He had no advice to give. If Senaar were opened up, and the Blue Nile cleared, he would be strong enough to retake Berber, providing Dongola still held out. Not one pound of money the Government had sent after him had

reached Khartoum, and two hundred thousand sterling was wanted at Kassala, for the expenses of the garrisons must be met, Khartoum alone costing £500 per diem. If the route got opened to Kassala, Gordon would, he said, despatch Stewart there with the journal. The Government might rely upon it, that if there was any possible way of avoiding the "wretched fighting" he would adopt it, for he hated the whole war. The people refused to allow him to go on expeditions, "owing to the bother which would arise if anything happened." "So I sit on tenter-hooks of anxiety," continued Gordon. "If I could make anyone chief here I would do it, but it is impossible, all the good men having been slain with Hicks. To show you that the Arabs fire well, two of our steamers which are blinded received 970 and 860 hits in their hulls respectively. Since our defeat of the 16th day of March, 1884 (thirty killed and fifty or sixty wounded, which is very little), I should think we have fired half-a-million cartridges. The conduct of the people and the troops has been excellent. I was thinking of issuing a proclamation liberating the slaves and those in arms, but have deferred doing so for fear of complications. I have great trust that God will bring us out triumphantly, and with no great loss on either side. We have queer stories as to the fall of Berber. The Arabs captured there all Stewart's Hussar uniform, and my medals, &c. It may be a bad tale to say it, but if we get out of this give Stewart a K.C.M.G., and spare me at all costs. You will thus save me the disagreeableness of having to refuse; but I hate these things. If we get out it is in answer to prayer, and not by our might, and it is a true pleasure to have been here, though painful enough at times. Mines are the things for defence in future. We have covered the works with them, and they have deterred all attacks, and done much execution. Since the 30th March, 1884, date of your Cairo despatch, we have had no news from you. I should

say that about two thousand determined men alone keep the Arabs in the field.

"I expect it will end in a terrible famine throughout the land. A spy yesterday stated that the Queen of England had arrived at Korosko. Perhaps it is a steamer. The only reinforcements the Soudan has received since the 27th November, 1883, the date when Hicks's defeat was known in Cairo, is seven persons, including myself, and we have sent down over 600 soldiers and 2,000 people. The people here and Arabs laugh over it. I shall not leave Khartoum until I can put someone in. If the Europeans like to go to the Equator I will give them steamers, but I will not leave these people after all they have gone through. As for routes, I have told you that the one from Wady Halfa, along the right bank of the Nile to Berber, is the best, and had not Berber fallen would have been a picnic. The other route is from Senhit to Kassala and to Abo Haraz, on the Blue Nile, which would be safe up to Kassala; but I fear it is too late. We must fight it out with our own means. If blessed by God we shall succeed. If not His will, so be it. The main thing is to send money to Kassala. Where is Wood? Kind regards to him and General Stephenson. Why write in cypher? It is useless, for Arabs have no interpreter. You say your feeling is to abandon the Soudan. So be it; but before you do that you must take down the Egyptian population, and this the Arabs do not see. According to all accounts 5,000 were massacred at Berber. All is for the best. I will conclude in saying, we will defend ourselves to the last; that I will not leave Khartoum; that I will try and persuade all Europeans to escape; and that I am still sanguine that by some means not clear God will give us an issue. What was the result of your negotiations for opening the road from Suakim to Berber? The Arabs captured the money you gave me at Berber, but it is the only money which the Egyptian

Pashas have turned out of the Soudan since their occupation.—Signed, C. G. GORDON. P.S.—July 31, 1884. Reading over your telegram of the 5th May, 1884, you ask me to state cause and intention in staying at Khartoum, knowing that Government means to abandon the Soudan. And in answer I say I stay at Khartoum because the Arabs have shut us up and will not let us out. I also add that even if the road was opened the people would not let me go unless I gave them some government or took them with me, which I could not do. No one would leave more unwillingly than I would, if it was possible.”

Writing again on the 31st July, to Sir E. Baring, General Gordon said:—“We continue, thank God, to drive the Arabs back up the Blue Nile, and hope to open the road to Sennaar in eight days or less, and to recapture the small steamer lost by Saleh Bey. We then hope to send an expedition to surprise and recapture Berber. It is a *sine quâ non* that you send me Zebehr, otherwise my stay here is indefinite. And you should send £50,000 to Dongola to be forwarded to Berber if we take it. The river begins to fall in say four months. Before that time you must either let the Sultan take back the Soudan or send Zebehr with a subsidy yearly. D.V., we will send down to Berber to take in the Egyptian troops here so that they will be on their way home, and I shall send Stewart. We hope, (D.V.) to recapture the two steamers which were lost at Berber on its fall. The Equator and Bahr Gazelle provinces can be (D.V.) relieved later on, and their troops brought out. As for Darfour it must be afterwards thought of, for we do not know if it still holds out. As for Kordofan I hope and believe the Mahdi has his hands full. I would vacate Sennaar if it was possible, but I do not think it is; and, also, the moral effect of its evacuation would be fatal to our future success, while we have not food to feed the refugee people who would come here. You will see if we open the road to Sennaar from here we cut the Arab movement in two by the Blue Nile.

I repeat I have no wish to retain this country ; my sole desire is to restore the prestige of the Government in order to get out the garrisons and to put some ephemeral government in position in order to get away."

Twenty-four of the superior military officers and eighteen civil employés at Khartoum, driven to a condition of despair, signed a really affecting appeal to Sir Evelyn Baring and the Egyptian Government, on the 19th August. They submitted for consideration that during a period of six months they had been unceasing in their defence of Khartoum, of their own lives, and those of their children and their property, day and night, till their misfortunes and dangers had assumed stupendous proportions which threatened their ruin. They were completely cut off from the outer world, and had in vain looked for reinforcements and succour from their Government. They had been allowed to delude themselves with vain hopes from hour to hour, while the Government showed indifference and delays. Weakened and reduced to extremities, God, in His mercy sent Gordon Pasha to them in the midst of the calamities of the siege, and they would all have perished from hunger had he been destroyed. But, sustained by his intelligence and great military skill, they had been preserved in Khartoum ; nor did he, in the arduous task of the defence, omit his benevolent care of the people. The signatories were penniless and without resources, and their patience was exhausted. The government neither succoured them, nor did it regard God's law, nor its own political duties. It made no effort to suppress anarchy, nor to prevent the effusion of blood ; nor yet did it try to maintain its own and their honour, though they were its people, its own subjects and co-religionists. If the Government persisted in its inactivity and abstained from quickly sending the people aid to put down the revolt, during the two months of high Nile, the whole Soudan would surely be lost, and the crisis end in their ruin. Therefore, the military officers and civil employés

appealed to the Khedive and showed him the true state of their calamities, imploring his mercy to deliver them "from this great and universal misfortune."

To the British Ministry Gordon addressed himself at the end of the same month, that English troops must be sent to the Soudan, and that Zebehr Pasha must be appointed, with assistants, and with a salary of eight thousand sterling per annum. If the Sultan would send two thousand of his troops the Soudan could be handed over to him. Providing no part of this scheme were carried out, and if the rebels attacked the people in the Soudan, and killed them, the Government would be responsible for their lives and all their salaries. He hoped, shortly, to take Berber, sending Stewart Pasha, the English Consul (Mr. Power), and the French Consul with the force. Gordon said he had already written that he should despatch Egyptian troops to re-take Berber and to occupy the place, and that these soldiers would be under the protection of the British Government, but, fearing that reinforcements might not be sent, fearing that they might not pay attention to those that he would send, and naturally afraid that a panic might occur among his troops, he thought it more advisable that, after taking the town they should remain in it fifteen days and burn it, and then return to Khartoum again, Colonel Stewart to proceed to Dongola. Then he (Gordon) would send to the Equator to withdraw the people who were there, after which it would be impossible for Mohammed Ahmed to come into Khartoum. If the Sultan's troops were sent, Gordon concluded, they should come by Dongola and Kassala, and £300,000 should be given for the purpose.

Spending nights in continual watching, visiting his outposts to see that every sentinel was on the alert, engaged in laying down his mines and wire entanglements, in sending out crowds of messengers to communicate with the nearest of the Egyptian garrisons, and

in occasional fights with the Mahdi, who repeatedly called upon him to surrender, Gordon was fully occupied. On the 4th September, in one of the expeditions towards Senaar, Gordon was defeated with heavy loss, but he had been so far successful in numerous engagements around Khartoum that he had relieved the pressure upon it considerably, and secured supplies of provisions calculated as sufficient to serve for four months at least.

"How many times have we written for reinforcements," were his words in a letter to the representatives of the two Governments, dated the 9th September, "calling your serious attention to the Soudan? No answer has come to us as to what has been decided in the matter, and the hearts of men have become weary of this delay. While you are eating, drinking, and resting on good beds, we, and those with us, both soldiers and servants, are watching by night and day, endeavouring to quell the movement of this false Mahdi. Of course you take no interest in suppressing this rebellion, the serious consequences of which are reverse of victorious for you, and the neglect thereof will not do. In two days' time the Vice Governor-General, and the two Consuls, will start from here to Berber, and thence to Dongola. The reason why I now send Colonel Stewart is because you have been silent all this while, and have neglected us, and lost time without doing any good. If troops were sent, as soon as they reach Berber this rebellion will cease, and the inhabitants will return to their former occupations. It is, therefore, hoped that you will listen to all that is told you by Stewart and the Consuls, and look at it seriously, and send troops, as we have asked, without delay."

Gordon did, on the 10th September, despatch Colonel Stewart in charge of a river steamer, named the *Abbas*, instructing him to pass Metammeh, Shendy, Berber, Abu Hamed, and Merawi at all hazards, his destination to be Dongola, a place he knew to be still faithful to the Khedieval Government. Stewart would never have been / 2 8 4

so commissioned had the banks of the Nile around Khartoum not been, as we have said, greatly relieved of the presence of the insurgents. But to protect the Colonel and Mr. Power, M. Herbin (the French Consul), and the thirty soldiers and crew of the *Abbas*, Gordon sent out two of his strongest armour-protected steamers to accompany them beyond Berber. Inspired by hope, although quite cognizant of the desperate enterprise he had undertaken, Colonel Stewart left Khartoum. Within twenty or thirty miles of the city, however, Stewart found that he had to cope with an enemy numerically stronger than he had anticipated in that quarter. Rifles and spears were brought to bear upon the steamers and their occupants, but they replied bravely, and steamed on to Shendy. Here they were beset by cannon from the forts, but, undeterred still, the gauntlet was run, and soon calmer waters were reached. At Berber, however, the rebels were discovered in great force, and contested for two days with Stewart's men, but ultimately they commenced to beat a retreat, and the mission of the two protecting steamers having been accomplished, they returned along the river in the direction of Khartoum, bidding Stewart and his party farewell ere they continued their journey to Dongola.

Freed from the storms of shot and spears went that lonely steamer, its commander a fugitive, erstwhile the partner in the triumphs of him who seven months before had traversed that very stretch of Nile, but who now, preferring to remain with the people, his children in name, had bade him and his fellows seek sweet liberty. Onward the *Abbas* travels, with difficulty, past the treacherous Fifth Cataract, but smoothly enough as Abu Hamed is approached. Each mile traversed is, apparently, so much farther removed from death, so much nearer the goal of freedom. And now officials and men are beyond Abu Hamed, a distance of one hundred and fifty miles has been placed between them and the besieged capital of the

184 desert, the great bend of the Nile is in the rear, and "still forward" is the cry. But steadily and with the nicest care the steamer proceeds. They are now above a succession of rapids, and in the midst of intersecting streams, that only permit of craft passing along their bosom when the Nile is high, and has not yet attained to its abnormal depth. Alas, that the shadow of unpropitious Fate is at the helm! Its presence is not disclosed until the vicinity of Salamet, near to the Fourth Cataract, is reached, and then a grinding, grating sound jars upon the ears, and the little *Abbas*, that has braved the ping, ping of thousands of deadly bullets upon its iron-covered sides, the force of sharp-pointed weapons hurled by brawny arms, and the swirl of the fast-running cataract, is filling. This is on the 6th October. The hard, unsympathetic rocks have been too much for her, she is struck where no Arab missile could assail her, and she groans and rends in seeming agony. Speedily, very speedily, do the party of fifty persons leave her as she breaks upon the jagged rocks, and reconnoitre upon the verge of the desert for a haven of rest. Ostensibly the people are kindly. They offer the shipwrecked party hospitality, bringing to them a whole sheep and food in variety, and promise them shelter and protection.

But the refugees had fallen among thieves. They were wickedly betrayed, deprived of the few articles saved from the wreck, and three-fourths of them foully butchered in the glare of the noontide sun. Stewart, Power, and Herbin were among the slaughtered; the journal containing the daily record of events at Khartoum from the 1st March to the 10th September, and which Gordon himself described as a gem, was lost to civilization, and other objects of interest destroyed.

Distorted accounts of the catastrophe were soon spread abroad, of course, all having a semblance of reliableness, pointing distinctly, however, to the violent death of the Europeans. Universal regret was expressed at the

lamentable occurrence, and in Parliament the liveliest admiration was shown for the splendid qualities of Stewart and his companions.

Nor was the cup of bitterness yet full. Public sorrow was still further intensified by the report persistently circulated that Gordon was a captive in the hands of the Mahdi. In the closing days of September, the message came from Dongola that the False Prophet, in view of the British advance, concentrated his available forces around Khartoum, whereby Gordon found his supplies intercepted, and running perilously short of provisions. Then the fidelity of the garrison began to waver, loud complaints of the neglect of the Egyptian Government were heard, and, reduced to desperation, Gordon resolved on a supreme effort for evacuating Khartoum, and taking with him all who could crowd upon his steamers. Sallying forth, the refugees were assailed and beaten, vessels run ashore or hulled, Gordon taken alive, and at once conducted under a heavy escort to the Mahdi's camp, where he remained a close prisoner.

Gordon a captive? He was still in Khartoum, undaunted, lion-hearted, treating the invitations of the Madhi to yield with scorn, daring him to prove his assumption of the "Heaven sent one" by drying up the Nile, and inflicting upon him losses reflecting greatly upon his pretensions.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LORD WOLSELEY'S ADDRESS TO THE TROOPS—THE ADVANCE—ARRIVAL AT KORTI—THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF'S DISPOSITIONS — THE TWO COLUMNS — HAZARDOUS UNDERTAKINGS — "KHARTOUM ALL RIGHT"—DASH ACROSS THE DESERT—GAKDUL WELLS—BATTLE OF ABU KLEA—COLONEL BURNABY KILLED—FIERCENESS OF THE ARABS—RECKLESS BRAVERY—GALLANT STAND—LOSSES—FATIGUES—THE ENEMY AGAIN SIGHTED—MORE FIGHTING—GENERAL STEWART SHOT—DEATH OR VICTORY—RETREAT OF THE ARABS—THE NILE—METAMMEH—GUBAT.

AWARE that the inaudible and noiseless foot of Time was an enemy relatively as great as the Mahdi, and the limited supplies at Khartoum, Lord Wolseley, by personal attention to details and by example, stimulated to still greater efforts the untiring officers and men constituting his command. While at Dongola, also, he offered a prize of a hundred pounds sterling to the battalion which should make the best passage from Sarras to Debbah, one won in a keen competition by the Royal Irish, the Royal Highlanders coming second, and the West Kent third.

Moreover, his lordship issued an order when the first boats had passed the Third Cataract, addressed "To the soldiers, sailors, and marines of the Nile Expedition," in which he observed that the relief of Gordon and his garrison, so long besieged in Khartoum—the glorious mission to them—was an enterprise that would stir the

heart of every soldier and sailor fortunate enough to have been selected to share in it, and that the very magnitude of the difficulties only stimulated them to increased exertions. They were all proud of General Gordon and his gallant and self-sacrificing defence of Khartoum, by which he added, if possible, to his already high reputation. He could not hold out many months longer, and he now called upon them to save the garrison. His courage and his patriotism were household words wherever the English language was spoken, and not only had his safety become a matter of national importance, but the knowledge that their brave comrade needed help urged them to push forward with redoubled energy. Neither he nor his garrison could be allowed to meet the sad fate which befell his gallant companion in arms, Colonel Stewart, who, when endeavouring to carry out an enterprise of unusual danger, was treacherously murdered by his captors. The force could, and would, with God's help, save Gordon from such a death. The labour of working up the Nile was immense, and to bear it uncomplainingly demanded the highest soldierlike qualities, and that contempt for danger, and that determination to overcome difficulty, which, in previous campaigns, had so distinguished all ranks of Her Majesty's Army and Navy. The physical obstacles that impeded their rapid progress were considerable; but who cared for them when it was remembered that General Gordon and his garrison were in danger? Under God, their safety rested with the Expedition, and, come what might, they must save them.

From Dongola on the 2nd November the advance of the united force really commenced, and with the dawn of the 12th December head-quarters had been transferred to Ambukol, to be moved on to Korti, 1,250 miles from Cairo by river, and 285 miles from Khartoum by the Nile route, on the 15th, where Lord Wolseley arrived the following day, the Second Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment being close behind. It was to Lord Wolseley

a source of heartfelt regret that he had not been able to reach Korti at an earlier date, but his advance had been delayed, his lordship reported to the Marquis of Hartington, through the difficulty of collecting supplies at that point, 1,400 miles from the sea, in sufficient quantities to warrant an advance into the neighbourhood of a besieged garrison that was very short of food, where all the surrounding districts had been laid waste, and where even the besieging army found it difficult to subsist.

The Commander-in-Chief had always thought it possible that upon arrival at Korti he might find it necessary to operate beyond that point in two columns, one continuing up the river in the English-built boats, while the other pushed rapidly across the desert to Metammeh, 185 miles away, on the opposite side of the Bayuda desert, and it was with the view to securing to himself the power of moving across the desert that he had proposed the formation of a camel brigade of picked troops under carefully selected officers. On arriving at Korti, Lord Wolseley had to decide the point. If he had not been restricted by time the first course would, he freely admitted, have been the most satisfactory, the safest, and would insure the best results, but he knew that General Gordon was pressed by want of food, and that the hot season was not far off when military operations in the Soudan were trying to the health of European troops.

Weighing everything, therefore, with that nicety of calculation for which he is conspicuous among Generals, Lord Wolseley eventually decided to divide his force into two columns, one to operate in the desert—to make a dash for Khartoum in fact—while the second continued its course along the Nile valley. To the command of the Desert column, or Camel brigade, he assigned Sir Herbert Stewart—with whom were Sir Charles Wilson and Sir Redvers Buller—and entrusted Major-General Earle, with Colonel Henry Brackenbury, Deputy-Adjutant-General of

the Expeditionary force, as principal staff officer, according to the latter, at the same time, as senior colonel, as an officer of the highest ability, and possessing his (Lord Wolseley's) entire confidence, the rank of Brigadier-General. Sir Charles Wilson was specially relegated to the task of opening up communication with General Gordon, once the Nile was struck at Metammeh, for the purpose of conferring with Gordon personally, and conveying his views on the political and military situation. Colonel Sir Charles Wilson was accompanied by Captain Lord Charles Beresford, and a small body of seamen, who were to take possession of any steamer lying at Metammeh, and deliver an unsealed message to General Gordon from Lord Wolseley. A detachment of infantry was, likewise, to proceed to Khartoum. If Sir Charles Wilson deemed it advisable, he was empowered on entering Khartoum to march his men through the city, to show the people that British troops were at hand, but he was only to stay long enough in Khartoum to confer with General Gordon. It was always possible, Lord Wolseley remembered, that when the Mahdi realised that a British army was approaching Khartoum he would retreat, and thus raise the siege. Under such circumstances Khartoum was to be the political centre of the operations, but Berber would become the military objective. The siege of Khartoum being thus raised, Berber would be occupied with a view to a march across the desert to Ariab on the Suakim road.

Lord Wolseley's plan of operating from Korti will be apparent. By despatching a column across the desert intervening from his head-quarters to Metammeh he would secure the shortest passage to Khartoum, would become possessed of the Gakdul and Abu Klea Wells, a most important desideratum in the march, and he hoped to hold Metammeh while communications were maintained with Gordon. Secondly, in despatching the second column along the Nile valley he would disperse the rebels *Okh*

lingering around Hamdab, 52 miles distant from Korti, would punish, or rather General Earle would, the Mon-nasir tribe, murderers of Colonel Stewart's party, further up the valley, would leave Berti in safety, and rid Abu Hamed of insurgents. Then, covering the great bend of the Nile, the column would operate on Berber, dislodge the rebels and join hands with General Herbert Stewart's column on the banks of the Nile in the neighbourhood of Metammeh. The task allotted to each column was hazardous not only because of necessarily limited supplies, a hostile country, and great physical difficulties, but by reason of the strength of the enemy being quite unknown. The inconsistencies of previous days still held good, for while on the one hand Lord Wolseley was assured by native spies that the Mahdists would not dare to meet the British, on the other there were reports of determined opposition having been decided upon. Again, so conflicting were the statements as to the numerical following with the Mahdi, that no one could say whether Metammeh would be reached without meeting with a rebel or whether thousands would dispute the march of the Desert column. That insurgents would endeavour to bar the progress of General Earle's column was a moral certainty for he was commissioned to strike the very route along which the revolt had headed from Khartoum. His column was the strongest, therefore, of the two, consisting of 2,400 men, including the 19th Hussars, the South Staffordshire Regiment, a number of the Essex Regiment, the Cornwall Light Infantry, Black Watch, Gordon Highlanders, an Egyptian camel corps, and a battery of six 7-pounders. Sir Herbert Stewart's column was 2,200 strong, and included sections of the various regiments of Guards, Dragoons, 1,050 of the Sussex Regiment, and men of the West Kent, Essex, Royal Irish, Mounted Infantry, and Naval Brigade.

Final arrangements were being pushed rapidly on for the advance of the two columns from Korti when, on the

31st December, a messenger who had been despatched with one of many copies of messages to Khartoum from Lord Wolseley, dated the 20th September and the 26th October, returned with a tiny piece of paper, about the size of an ordinary postage stamp, on which was written : "Khartoum all right. Signed, C. G. Gordon. Dec. 14th, 1884." The message was genuine, Lord Wolseley telegraphed to Sir E. Baring, as he knew Gordon's writing well. Gordon's seal was also on the back of the scrap (an evident contradiction to the report of months before that Gordon had not an official seal with him at Khartoum). The messenger was told by General Gordon to give Lord Wolseley the following verbal message : "We are besieged on three sides—Omdurman, Halfiyeh, and Hoggi Ali. Fighting goes on night and day. Enemy cannot take us except by starving us out. Do not scatter your troops ; enemy are numerous. Bring plenty of troops if you can. We still hold Omdurman on the left bank and the fort on the right bank. The Mahdi's people have thrown up earthworks within rifle-shot of Omdurman. The Mahdi lives out of gunshot. About four weeks ago the Mahdi's people attacked Omdurman and disabled one steamer. We disabled one of the Mahdi's guns. Three days after fighting was renewed on the south, and rebels were again driven back. Saleh Bey and Slatin Bey are chained in Mahdi's camp. (Secret and confidential.)—Our troops in Khartoum are suffering from lack of provisions. Food we still have is little ; some grain and biscuit. We want you to come quickly. You should come by Metammeh or Berber. Make by these two roads. Do not leave Berber in your rear. Keep enemy in your front, and when you have taken Berber send me word from Berber. Do this without letting rumours of your approach spread abroad. In Khartoum there are no butter nor dates, and little meat. All food is very dear."

That the two messages, the one written, and the other verbal, display an obvious contradiction will not for a

moment be disputed, for while the first speaks of Khartoum being "all right" the second points to the condition "all wrong." It is certain, beyond all doubt, that Gordon wrote the words upon the tiny strip in fear that it would fall into the hands of the rebels as scores of his messages had done, and that he had no intention to allow the False Prophet to know of the desperate straits to which the garrison of Khartoum were reduced. The verbal message proves this itself. If Gordon had not intended to deceive the Mahdi, in case the messenger was captured, what necessity for a verbal report? Underlying all was the suspicion that the Mahdi would become possessed of it, else "Khartoum must soon fall" would have been written in lieu thereof. In a letter to the Mudir of Dongola, likewise dated the 15th December, a day anterior to that indited to Lord Wolseley, the wording is extremely cautious. "I present to your Excellency my salutations, and I am exceedingly thankful to you for your loyalty and courage in holding the Mourdirizeh, and I trust you will attain higher honours. I have now to inform you that Khartoum, the troops, servants, and inhabitants are well, but in need of reinforcements. Please communicate my respects and thanks to the Khedive. Also my compliments to the officers, soldiers, and natives of Dongola, and inform them that I am greatly thankful to them for their loyalty to the Government, and that I trust all difficulties will soon disappear." "Do not write in cypher," he had replied to Lord Wolseley, "for I have none, Stewart having taken it with him, and it is of no import, for the Mahdi knows everything, and you need not fear him." It was in this communication that Gordon stated a mysterious Frenchman was with the Mahdi.

However, on the 30th December General Stewart was in readiness to commence a dash across the desert from Korti to Metammeh. The intervening distance was made up of desert waste, the water supply was very limited, and the utmost precaution had to be exercised against

the appearance of large bodies of the enemy. Gakdul Wells lie one hundred miles on the route, and these were to be seized first by one half of the column, with some 1,500 camels. Of Guards and marines there were 381, mounted infantry 30, 90 of the heavy dragoons, 90 light cavalry, about 30 men of the Royal Engineers, and 45 men of the 19th Hussars, with the usual proportion of native servants, medical staff, and transport. Every man received given rations for seven days, seven gallons of water, and 150 rounds of ammunition. The Guards were in front, and the mounted infantry in the rear in close column of companies, ready to dismount and form square at a moment's notice. Prior to the start Lord Wolseley inspected the men and the whole of the arrangements, then the order was given, and off moved the men and animals amid ringing cheers, Major Kitchener, scouts, and six native guides in front. They were marching, as far as they were concerned, from General Stewart downwards, into the unknown, but it was enough that every yard of sand they traversed brought them nearer to Gordon and to Khartoum. Rather over 30 miles per day was done by the corps—a wonderfully quick passage, all things considered—so that on the third day the Gakdul Wells were reached in safety, and, fortunately, without the slightest opposition. The water supply was found to be good as to quantity and splendid in quality, and material was discovered to form impregnable entrenchments. These were at once constituted, weary as the marching had been. A troop of the 19th Hussars had, under Captain Fanshawe, captured a prominent sheikh and his family, said to have been engaged for the Mahdi, and Captain Walsh's division of mounted infantry brought to the Wells, also, five natives, two of whom wore the Mahdi's uniform.

Leaving the Guards, engineers, artillery, and reserve supplies at Gakdul, General Stewart immediately retraced his steps for Korti, with the mounted infantry and

Hussars as an escort, and ere he had been absent a week they were heartily cheered again at head-quarters. One report of the prisoners whom Sir Herbert Stewart brought into camp with him created no little disappointment. It was that Metammeh, the objective of the column, was in the hands of the Mahdi, and that the whole of the population to the south were favourable to him. There were steamers belonging to General Gordon, however, near Metammeh—as the General had promised there should be—and this afforded hope that, in spite of the place being held by the False Prophet, communications with Gordon could be secured along the river.

Determined that no delay should occur, the second portion of the column was moved up to the Gakdul Wells, a post being established at Hambok, midway, and on the 14th January the advance for Metammeh, still 80 miles away, was begun. All went well until the night of the 16th, when the approach was being made to the next wells of importance, the Abu Klea, 23 miles from Metammeh, when numerous companies of the enemy were sighted, and soon it was evident that the march of the column was to be resisted. Scouts were sent out, and towards evening they returned to camp with the intelligence that the wells were occupied by the Arabs in force. Dispositions were thereupon made for the remainder of the day and night, leaving nothing unthought of as regarded the comfort of the men, consistent with due provision against attack. Indeed the column was formed to meet attacks. The men were massed in brigade of columns, the Guards on the right, the heavy camel corps in the centre, the artillery and engineers in the rear of the Guards, Lord Charles Beresford's naval brigade being on the left face. A harmless fire was maintained throughout the night by the Arabs ensconced in surrounding ridges, and early on the 17th the British advanced towards the main body in the square formation, the mounted infantry doing duty as skirmishers on the front and right,

262

the Hussars performing like service on the left. The left front face of the square proper included two companies of mounted infantry, and the right two companies of Guards, mounted infantry and dragoons being on the left face, Guards and two companies of the Sussex Regiment on the right face, men of the heavy camel corps constituting the rear face, while the artillery was in the centre of the front face, and the naval brigade in the centre of the rear face. In the centre were a number of camels and the hospital corps. Everybody was on foot, the majority of the camels having been left in an entrenched position in charge of men of the Sussex Regiment.

The British were moving round the left flank of the enemy's position, forcing them to be attacked or enfiladed, "when suddenly the Arabs leaped up in dense masses, and rushed fiercely at great speed against the square. The onset was such that the skirmishers had hardly time to reach the square, before the enemy, following close upon their retreat, came upon the heavy dragoons. So fierce and rapid was the rush of this moment that the heavy cavalry were borne back by the masses of Arabs, and, in a moment, the square was forced. The Gardner gun was jammed, and for ten minutes a desperate struggle raged from the left rear to the centre. Here Colonel Burnaby fell dead, a spear having severed his jugular vein. General Stewart's horse was shot under him, and the General fell to the ground. At the same time his orderly was killed beside him. Camels were speared by the Arabs and the interior of the mass presented a mass of falling camels, and struggling Arabs and soldiers, the whole being filled, also, with a dense smoke and dust, while shots and sword-strokes were the replies to the Arabs' spear thrusts. It was not long before every Arab in the square was killed, the rest beaten off, and the square reformed, amid ringing cheers, on fresh ground."

The British losses were heavy, owing to the inrush of the rebels, and the desperate hand to hand encounters

that took place—in all, nine officers killed, as many wounded, and 65 non-commissioned officers and men killed, and 85 wounded, of a force 1,500 strong, a number of men having been left in charge of posts and wells. The officers killed included Colonel Burnaby (Royal Horse Guards), Major Carmichael (5th Lancers), Major Atherton (5th Dragoon Guards), Major Gough (Royal Dragoons), Captain Darley and Lieutenant Law (4th Dragoon Guards), and Lieutenants Pigott and De Lisle (naval brigade). Lord St. Vincent and Major Dickson, Lieutenants Lyall and Guthrie and Artillery Surgeon Magill, were severely wounded, and Lord Airlie and Major Gough slightly. The strength of the enemy was estimated at nearly 10,000 men, 800 of whom were left dead around the square.

Immediately after the battle, the 19th Hussars pushed on for the Abu Klea Wells, and jaded as the remainder of the force were by marching, night alarms, a fierce heat, scanty water supply, and a desperate encounter with a foe eight times as numerous as they, Abu Klea Wells were reached at five o'clock on the afternoon of the same day. General Stewart, in his despatch to Lord Wolseley, paid his force a well deserved compliment, saying it had been his duty to command a force from which exceptional work, exceptional hardships, and, it might even be added, exceptional fighting had been called for. It would be impossible for him to adequately describe the admirable support that had been given to him by every officer and man of the force. He regretted to say that the British loss had been severe, but the success had been complete, and the enemy's loss so very heavy that it was calculated to dishearten them, so that all future fighting might be of a less obstinate character. Of General Stewart Lord Wolseley spoke in the terms of the warmest praise.

Having rested a night at the Abu Klea Wells and recovered somewhat from the great fatigues of marching and fighting, the men of General Stewart's force were

again busy in strengthening the place, to provide for the sick and wounded, while the able-bodied of the soldiers continued towards Metammeh, and in the afternoon the trumpet call rang out, and once more the onward movement had been resumed. With only short halts at intervals the marching went through the night, sleep being obtained as best it could by the tired and overworked men. Some of them were overpowered in the saddle, others would snatch a few moments' respite until the rear of the column was brought up. Suspicions there were that the principal guide was leading the force astray, but he was not interfered with unduly, although disappointment was experienced at daybreak that the Nile had not been sighted. Traces of the enemy were, however, discovered, and before the sun had risen an exchange of shots had commenced. A halt having been made, attention was bestowed upon the construction of a zareba, and breakfast was partaken of under the most trying difficulties, the fatigues being added to by the unpleasant proximity of bodies of daring Arabs. Apparently General Stewart had gone upon wrong premises in supposing that the enemy were disheartened and that their fighting would be of a less obstinate character.

As the day wore on the boldness of the insurgents increased; they presented themselves from every side in great numbers, and by noon thousands were again harassing very sorely our gallant fellows. "The situation was becoming unbearable," says Mr. Burleigh. "The British were being fired at without a chance of returning blows with interest. There were three courses open to them—to sally forth and fight their way to the Nile; to fight for the river, advancing stage by stage, with the help of zarebas and temporary works; or to strengthen their position and try to withstand the Arabs and lack of water till Wolseley should send a force to their assistance, they, meanwhile, sending a messenger or two back

to Korti with the news. It was bravely decided to go out and engage the enemy at close quarters. At 2 p.m. the force was to march out in square, carrying nothing except ammunition and stretchers. Each man was to take 100 rounds and to have his water bottle full. Everything was put in most thorough readiness for the enterprise. Lord Charles Beresford, who had been seedy since we left Abu Klea, with Colonel Barrow, remained in command of the enclosure, or zereba, containing the animals and stores. They had under them the Naval Contingent, the 19th Hussars, a party of Royal Engineers, and Captain Norton's detachment of Royal Artillery, with three screw guns, and details from regiments and men of the Commissariat and Transport Corps. All day long Lord Charles and Captain Norton had been pounding the enemy whenever the Arabs gave them a chance, the former at the Gardner gun, and the latter with two of his light guns. It was nearly three before the square started, Sir Charles Wilson in command, but Colonel Boscawen acting as Executive Officer. Lord Airlie, who had been slightly wounded at Abu Klea, and again on the 19th, together with Major Wardrop, served upon Sir Charles's staff, as they had done upon General Stewart's. The square was joined to the east of our enclosed defence, the troops lying down as they were assigned their stations. The Guards formed the front, with the Marines on the right front corner, the Heavies on the right and right rear, the Sussex on the rear, and the Mounted Infantry on the left rear and left flank. Colonel Talbot led the Heavies, Major Barrow the Hussars, Colonel Rowley the Guards, Major Poe the Marines, and Major Sunderland the Sussex; Captain Verner, of the Rifle Brigade, was told off to direct squares to march towards the river. When the order was given for the square to rise and advance it moved off to the west to clear the outlying work."

General Stewart had then been shot in the stomach

and compelled to relinquish the command, and Sir Charles Wilson had succeeded him—Lord Charles Beresford, who was senior, having declined the honour because of his connection with the Navy—Mr. Cameron, the special correspondent of the *Standard*, and Mr. Herbert, representing the *Morning Post*, had been killed in the midst of the square—the soldiers were falling before the fire of the enemy, who had now massed in front, showing that their courage was unabated, and that their fanaticism had been worked upon by the “holy men” in a remarkable degree. The situation was truly desperate, but the fate of the whole fighting force, and of the wounded at Abu Klea and Gakdul, and, it was believed, of Gordon, depended upon unwavering resistance and complete victory. Death or victory was indeed awaiting those grand soldiers, every one of whom had, and was now, proving himself a hero.

The square moved with a slow march from the newly-constructed zareba, Mr. Pearce tells us, across the open, protected by the fire of the Gardner gun in a fort or redoubt thrown up hastily, and flanking skirmishers threaded their way through the scattered mimosa, and halted to close ranks in the open, then changed their direction to take the enemy’s main position in flank, all the while exposed to a galling fire.

As the square stopped the men laid down to deliver volley after volley with superb steadiness. At last the critical moment came when the rebel spearmen came to hurl themselves against the little square. The men never wavered a second, but cheered lustily when they saw the foe coming. The marines and the mounted infantry received the charge with a fire so deadly that the Arabs dropped in lines, then recalled and recoiled broken. Meanwhile, another dense column advancing from the south was stopped by shells from Norton’s guns in front with great precision. Then the enemy’s redoubtable reserve of horsemen, standard-bearers, and fanatical followers,

rushed against Wilson's force; against that withering fire, in which the Guards and Sussex this time played a part, and the furious onslaught was stopped, to be renewed no more.

A withering fire was, however, kept up until our men were gladdened, later on in the day, by sighting the Nile above Metammeh, at Gubat, whither Lord Wolseley had instructed Sir Herbert Stewart to conduct the force on learning that Metammeh was occupied by the Arabs. The town was actually visited on the occasion of a reconnaissance in force, but finding that the walls were strongly fortified, and that to capture the place would be to court a serious loss of life among already reduced numbers, the British retired on Gubat. The British loss since leaving Abu Klea had, it should be stated, been 20 killed and 60 wounded; while of the enemy some 250 were killed and hundreds wounded, of a force estimated at 7,000 strong.

During the reconnaissance three of General Gordon's steamers came down the Nile and steamed alongside the bank. "Such ringing cheers our men gave when they saw their Khartoum allies landing, and the Khartoum men returned the greeting with interest. Half a battalion was landed from the steamers, and two brass guns which had been carried from Khartoum were also brought ashore. The British and Gordon's men fraternised after landing, and when another steamer arrived, towing a barge laden with provisions, great was the joy of all. Our men gave another round of cheers, and everyone appeared to regard their troubles as over."

Indescribable was the anxiety in England anent that gallant little army that had fought a way across the Bayuda desert. It was known at home that Abu Klea had been fought, and even the intelligence of this victory was all too long in coming, for there was no telegraph-wire between the Wells and Korti, and three days elapsed between the event and the glad tidings being received in London. But when the advancing column had resumed

their toilsome march no intelligence came for a period sadly too prolonged. Individuals who were not given to calculation entered into minute estimates of the time likely to be consumed in striking the Nile; maps were consulted, and every scrap of rumour, however vague, was eagerly accepted. When the hours had merged into days intensified feeling was general—it was observable in public and affected the family circle. Had the rebels closed in upon the rear of the column and surrounded them, and overwhelmed them by sheer weight of numbers, as they had done upon the force of Hicks Pasha? Were our men annihilated and lost to sight for ever? Was the cord that had been stretched over the desert sands at such tremendous risks to be broken when it had been run out to, and was about to be seized by, those awaiting our succour? Were the anxieties of months, the labours of the journey along the Nile Valley, and the perils of the march set at naught, and all to go unrewarded? These are but examples of the questions submitted with feverish haste, and unspeakable agony.

When, therefore, a few hours after Captain Pigott had entered the camp at Korti at five o'clock on the morning of the 28th January, a message from Gubat was received at the War Office and transmitted thence to all parts of the country, unbounded was the joy at the story it told. Another victory, the desert column joined hands with Gordon's men, within 100 miles of Khartoum, and that noble soldier still alive, was indeed a budget sufficient to raise one and all from the slough of despair to the glorious heights of unmitigated, delicious joy. A national calamity had surely been averted, Gordon would soon be rescued from a living tomb, and the campaign in the Soudan terminated!

The world forgot in the intoxication of the moment
l'homme propose et Dieu dispose!

CHAPTER XXIV.

SHENDY—SIR CHARLES WILSON STARTS FOR KHARTOUM—
THE STEAMERS—GROUNDING OF THE *Bordein*—
DIREFUL NEWS—RUNNING THE GAUNTLET—DISMAY
—FALL OF KHARTOUM—SCENES IN THE CITY—ARAB
REJOICINGS—GALLANTRY OF THE BRITISH—HONOUR-
ABLE RETREAT—RACE FOR ABU KRU—WRECK OF THE
STEAMER *Tall-Howeiya*—LETTER FROM THE MAHDI—
SURRENDER DEMANDED—A CLEVER RUSE—LOSS OF
THE *Bordein*—PITIABLE SITUATION—REFUGE UPON
AN ISLAND—LIEUTENANT WORTLEY'S ADVENTURE—
"TOO LATE"—DISMAY IN THE BRITISH CAMP—LORD
CHARLES BERESFORD TO THE RESCUE—ALARMING
INCIDENT—ENGLAND AND THE FALL OF KHARTOUM—
NATIONAL SORROW—DOUBTS—HOW GORDON FELL—
CONCLUSION.

"KHARTOUM all right. Can hold on for years.—C. G. GORDON. 29—12—84." Such was the cheering message handed to Sir Charles Wilson by one of the men from Khartoum awaiting the British near Metammeh. It had been written upon a scrap of paper, as had the similarly-worded message to Lord Wolseley received nearly a month before at Korti; it breathed still of reliance, of strength, of victory. Was there, however, an ulterior meaning in the words as in the tiny missive conveyed across the desert to Korti? Was it not intended to deceive the Mahdi, pro-

viding it should fall into his hands? To all appearances, Yes.

Metammeh, Sir Charles Wilson now knew, was held in force by the enemy. The day following that on which Gubat was reached, a reconnaissance was made towards Shendy, on the opposite bank of the Nile to Metammeh, but nothing could be done, as this place, likewise, was crowded with Arabs, and was well protected by guns; the rebels had occupied an island in close proximity to Gubat; they had been largely reinforced since the journey of our troops from Abu Klea to the river had been disputed for three days in succession; there was too much reason to fear that Omdurman, a strongly-fortified place overlooking Khartoum, the arsenal, in fact, of the city, had been captured by the Mahdi; and it was pretty well understood that the rebels were in force at points right away from Metammeh to Khartoum. Indeed, the occupants of Gordon's steamers awaiting the coming of the British had had experience of the fact. The river journey to Khartoum had been closed to them for three weeks, so that it was only by traversing the desert route between Khartoum and the vicinity of Metammeh that communications between Gordon and his people upon the steamers could be maintained. And this explains the message dated the 29th September, and the purpose hidden behind the face of it; for a faithful servant of Gordon, named George, a Greek, had with him, upon one of the steamers, a collection of correspondence and a five months' diary, reciting an entirely different aspect of the situation to that conveyed in the words, simply, of the tiny scrap carried by the native on foot.

However, at eight o'clock on the morning of January 24th, everything was in readiness for a river journey from Gubat, or, more strictly speaking, Abu Kru, to Khartoum—the question has often been asked why the start was not made two days sooner. On board Gordon's steamer, the *Bordein*, were Colonel Sir Charles Wilson, Captain

Gascoigne, Khasm-el-Mous Bey (a most trusty follower of Gordon, and the commander of the little fleet), ten non-commissioned officers of the Royal Sussex Regiment, and 110 Soudini troops; then came the *Tall-Howeiya*, with Captain Trafford and 10 men of the Sussex Regiment, and Lieutenant Stuart Wortley (King's Royal Rifles). Each steamer carried two guns. Owing to stoppages for wood, and the necessity there was for proceeding slowly, not more than twenty-five miles were made by the steamers that day; but after a night at Derrara, anchors were lifted soon after five o'clock on the morning of the 25th, and about noon the first shots were fired upon the vessels. They did no harm, an incident which happened in the evening being fraught with greater danger—the grounding of the *Bordein* upon one of the numerous rocks near the Sixth Cataract, in consequence of the lowness of the river. It was not until all the men had been landed, and a portion of the cargo removed, that the steamer was, at nine o'clock on the morning of the 26th, got off the rock; and even then misfortune attended every movement, such as the grazing of boulders, entering into a wrong channel, and unlucky turnings. The distance between the Sixth Cataract and Khartoum had not been decreased by half-a-dozen miles on that day, and the 27th, again, gave no promise of improvement; for it was with the utmost difficulty that the passage of Shabluka, only 30 yards in width, could be cleared, and a gorge between a range of towering hills ascended. Then the party, who had been informed on the 26th that Gordon had been fighting for fifteen days, were terribly startled by the intelligence imparted by an Arab that Khartoum had fallen, and that Gordon had been killed, a report they dared not believe when the excitement of the moment had vanished.

Wednesday, the 28th January, dawned upon the steamers unpropitiously, and, as the day developed, the clouds gathered quickly. In the first place, Sir Charles Wilson and his companions were dismayed at hearing, from the

banks of the Nile, the story repeated that the Mahdi's hordes had entered Khartoum; and a persistent fusillade being opened and sustained upon them, their hearts sank within them. Slowly the conviction forced itself that Khartoum and Gordon had fallen, and "all is lost now" was the knell that struck piercingly upon them. But there must be no retreat yet. Hearsay evidence should not be conclusive; the desperate situation commanded desperate measures, and amid a hail of bullets, and with hearts crushed and broken, did that devoted band of British and Soudini pursue their course. Halfiyeh—the first garrison Gordon relieved from Khartoum ten months before this awful 28th January—was reached at noon, and from the forts came such a hot fire that the retaliatory acts from the steamers appeared to be quite ineffectual. Then, at noon, the telescope revealed Government House in Khartoum to be without an Egyptian flag above its highest point, habitations wrecked, and tokens of wild disorder. Still, the *Bordein* and the *Tall-Howeiya* steamed on, albeit from the Island of Tutti and from Omdurman rained heavy showers of lead and iron from forts and rifles upon the armour-plates with which these vessels were covered.

Then upon the ear, alternately with the ring of musketry fire and the thunders from fort guns, came the hoarse cries of victory—the frantic screams of the dervish beside himself with joy, the shrieks of Arab footmen who had been defeated for twelve months in the one desire of their hearts, but who now were frothing maniacs, almost, because of long-delayed hope realised; and floating through the air at intervals were the horrible sounds of the tom-tom, while above the heads of the heathen, and on every side, were waving gaudy banners and emblems telling, alas, too surely, that Khartoum was no longer Egyptian. A very Bedlam was that goal of the Gordon Relief Expedition. So heavy were the showers of shot and shell upon the steamers, protected as they were with armour, that it was utterly impossible to proceed any

further than a station within two hundred yards of the shore in Khartoum city; nevertheless, it was with agonising feelings that the engines of the *Bordein* and *Tall-Howeiya* were reversed, and their bows directed for Abu Kru.

One man had been killed and five wounded, the unprotected parts of the steamers had been grievously damaged; and had not the steamers beat a hasty retreat from that murderous hail, few, if any, British or Soudini, had been left to tell the story. So for four hours longer the vessels had to run the gauntlet of fire, another life being lost and eight soldiers falling wounded, others, of the Soudini, being completely overwhelmed and wailing piteously through having lost their wives, their children, their all, confiscated and subjected to the fury of the rebels because of tried and faithful service to Gordon and the Egyptian Government.

After the steamers had been anchored in mid-stream, a Council was hastily summoned; and on the instructions of Sir Charles Wilson, messengers were ordered on shore to glean what information they could. Ere darkness had well settled upon the land they returned, confirming that which had been already seen and heard, namely, that Khartoum had indeed fallen. Black-hearted treachery had been at work, another Judas had been busy—one double-dyed villain, Faragh Pasha, had opened the gates on the Omdurman side of the city, while a second precious instrument, with hellish purpose, had secured boats and steamers into which the Mahdists were huddled, as hundreds swam the river to join in a Pandemonium rush upon the poor, helpless soldiery and populace. This was on the night of the 26th, and now it was the 28th.

Time dragged slowly on with officers and men of the *Bordein* and the *Tall-Howeiya*, and when the 29th January came, with its terrible remembrances and perilous situation, matters were made yet more desperate through the injured paddle-wheel of the *Bordein*, the difficulties of the

Sixth Cataract, the nervousness of the pilots, and by the *Tall-Howeiya* striking heavily upon a sunken rock, staving in a section of her hull and filling rapidly. Those on board were not saved without a protracted struggle and excitement, and taken in nuggars to an adjoining island, where a miserable night was spent face to face with the fell destroyer, Death. Every moment was expected to be the last. Fears there were that a host of the rebels would surround and crush them, either by shooting them like so much game or by reducing them to starvation. The wrecked and woe-begotten party were visited by the Shagiya tribes, who, after wavering, said they would join the Mahdi and not the British; and ultimately there arrived a dervish specially commissioned by the Mahdi to demand surrender.

The messenger of Mohammed Ahmed produced a letter in the following terms:—"In the name of the merciful God! Thanks for the honourable God and prayers to our Apostle Mohammed. From the poor servant of God, Mohammed El Mahdi, son of Abdullah, to the English officers and the shaggaieh and all their followers. First thing, surrender yourselves, and you will be safe. I briefly tell you, perhaps God will direct you in the way of the righteous. Let it be known to you that the city of Khartoum and all the neighbourhood thereof has been destroyed by the power of God Almighty, which no one can oppose. This thing was done through us; everything is now in our hands. As long as you are a small force, and now in our hands, very likely, you can do whatever you like, either give yourself up and prevent bloodshed of the servants of the creatures of God, who are in your hands, and the grace and the peace of God and his Apostle will settle upon you. If you do not believe what I have written, and you want to know the reality about Khartoum, send a special messenger from yourselves to come here and assure yourselves of the truth of the information, and the peace of God and his Apostle be with your messenger. We shall

not kill you till he comes here and sees all about the matter for himself, and we will send him back with a safe escort from us. As God says in his precious Book, 'If any of the ungodly come to you you must keep him safely until he listens to the words of God, and then do for him whatever he wishes.' If, on the other hand, you like to fight, we shall not oppose your wish. If it were not that we pity you we would not have written this letter to you. If you yield you should know that the peace of God will settle upon you, and you will be saved from all hurt. If you do not wish to yield you shall be punished in this world and the next. It is known that victory is for the believers. You must not be proud of your steamers and many other things. If you do not yield to my advice you shall repent. You must be quick, or your wings will be cut. A man who guides the people in the right way God will guide him also aright. 11th Rabbeah Mani, 1302. P.S.—No God but one God. Mohammed is the Apostle of God.—MOHAMMED EL MAHDI, Son of Abdullah."

The dervish added that Gordon had been taken alive, and that the conqueror's intention was not to cease his march until he arrived before Stamboul. The Mahdi awaited a direct answer, the dervish said. To gain time, therefore, and to secure a passage of the rapids close at hand, Khasm-El-Mous Bey replied that the steamers' crews and occupants would surrender when the neighbourhood of the cataract had been traversed, at the foot of which guns were brought into position, and a thousand Arabs drawn up to prevent the re-passing of the British and Soudini. Confident that the surrender would take place as promised, the dervish agreed to the stipulation; and, to the unspeakable relief of the unfortunate force under Sir Charles Wilson, the Arabs were withdrawn from above the gorge they commanded, allowing those who had been on board the *Tall-Howeiyah* to go first in nuggars, or river boats, the *Bordein* in the rear. On the 30th, appearance went to show that Abdul Hamid Bey,

who had gone up with Sir Charles Wilson's party, was an execrable rascal, in that he had grounded the vessel that had been wrecked purposely, with a view of going over to the Mahdi, an intention he was only precluded from carrying into effect by the unswerving loyalty of Khasm-El-Mous. On this day, also, two Shagiya boarded the remaining steamer, corroborating the story as to the blood-guilty Feragh; but adding that Gordon, with the Greek Consul Nicola, and 50 Greeks and soldiers of the Shagiya tribe, had shut themselves up in the Catholic Church at Khartoum, that they had food and ammunition with them, and that they were determined to hold out till the bitter end. As we shall shortly find, the recital was about as true as another in which they indulged, namely, that the British had attacked and captured Metammeh after three days' fighting.

There was some little food here, in the latter story, calculated to elevate, but the spirits of Sir Charles Wilson's party were again down to zero, and once again destruction was stark before them, when on the 31st, as the *Bordein* was dropping down the river, stern foremost, and within four miles of an entrenched position of the insurgents, she collided against one of the countless rocks, and sustained damage to her side, causing her to fill just as she had been towed to an island, where her tenants were landed to bivouac and await rescue or annihilation. One chance alone there was to ensure rescue, and that was to communicate with Abu Kru. But how was it to be done? How were the works of the enemy near Gubat to be passed, for all that was left to the party of 220 souls was three small boats, mere specks upon the water compared with the size and the power of armed positions of the rebels. But, as we have said, a desperate situation calls for desperate measures, and when the fierce heat of the noontide sun had been tempered by the cool air of the evening, and a nice calculation had been made in regard to the hour when the Arab entrenchments, four

miles down river, could be passed, that is to say, in the semi-darkness, Lieutenant Wortley left the island upon which were his companions in adversity. He had with him in a rowing boat four English soldiers and eight natives, their lives and those of the men upon the island, hanging upon a thread of tenderest fibre. More than a spark of heroism this of Lieutenant Wortley's; a touching example of self-abnegation on the part of Sir Charles Wilson to remain with his inferiors in the jaws of death, when he might well have been forgiven had he commanded the boat's crew and ensured his own safety by rowing down stream to Abu Kru.

O! Grief! that this should be the end of all: A boat's crew floating down the mighty Nile upon a few planks, beset with perils of war, of water, and of jagged rocks, with a party of fellow-creatures upon an island, shipwrecked, homeless, unfed, bereaved, at the mercy of victorious, yet disappointed foes thirsting for revenge and blood; Khartoum, the centre of thought and fear, lost; Gordon butchered or a prisoner, cast into a dungeon and heavily laden with chains by a gloating adversary; millions of human beings disappointed of their hope, the toils, the ungrudging toils of seven thousand men over rapids and cataracts, set at naught; the scorching heat and burning thirst of the desert unrewarded; the fight, shoulder to shoulder, against the mad, demoniacal rush of fanatical heathen withstood and repulsed, and the loss of comrades dearly beloved, wasted; an expenditure of two millions sterling thrown to the winds, eleven months of heroic fortitude, resource, abandonment of self, measure for measure, shot for shot, distress by day and agony by night, for a poor, downtrodden, and trusting people. O! Grief! that this should be the end of all!

"Too late," wrote Mr. Charles Williams, with the desert column at Abu Kru. "Khartoum fell on the 26th January. Such is the terrible intelligence with which we have been overwhelmed. Nor tongue nor pen

can adequately describe the effect produced on our hearts by the fatal announcement. It was so little expected, that the men had been comforting themselves with the prospect of being able to relieve the long-beleaguered city, and cheer its heroic defender within a few weeks at the latest. The news fell like a thunderbolt in our camp, and has saddened and depressed the stoutest hearts." They had seen that little craft with its thirteen occupants approach Abu Kru at three o'clock in the morning of the 1st February, after it had floated past the enemy's works unharmed, in the dead of night, and bewildered at the sight were afraid of its coming. The gallant fellows had watched and watched, they had looked for the returning steamers and the flags of old England and of Egypt floating side by side, they had waited to cheer and congratulate their comrades who had been fortunate enough to enter Khartoum and feast their eager eyes upon that grand, noble, solitary figure, and to exchange salutations with him—the first arrivals in the desert city for well-nigh twelve months—and they had prepared themselves to listen to the wonderful stories of his love and his sacrifices, and to hear that with them he was to be the jewel they should protect, his trials over and his cares no more. But how changed is everything—a flash of lightning, a peal of awe-inspiring thunder from the blue vaults of heaven, a tempest when there is nothing to warn them of its coming, a cyclone when the ship is under press of canvas to gather in the gentlest breeze, the simoon, the tornado, when all is peace!

While, therefore, Lord Cochrane, departs from Abu Kru to re-cross the sands of the far-stretching Bayuda, astounding in his course the posts at Abu Klea and Gakdul—for Lord Wolseley, at Korti, there to deliver his woful message, let us see for a few moments what was done towards rescuing Sir Charles Wilson and those with him upon the island in mid-river.

That very day, then, upon which Lieutenant Stuart

Wortley startled the camp at Abu Kru by the manner of his coming and his dire communication, Lord Charles Beresford assumed the command of the third of Gordon's steamers, the *Sofiyeh*, and was on his way to the Sixth Cataract to effect a rescue. Lieutenants Webber, Vonkune, and Kepple, and fifty of the naval brigade went with his lordship, and about twenty of the mounted infantry, under Lieutenant Bowen, with twenty natives. The evening of Sunday, when the steamer was put under weigh, was uneventful; so was Monday, the 2nd February, but on the third day, when two miles distant from the island of refuge, fire was opened upon the *Sofiyeh*, and in very limited space of time the guns of the vessel were replying with interest, scattering the riflemen behind embrasures, and damaging the forts as she went in front of them. Just, however, as the lively vessel was steaming out of gun-shot, and making for the island at all costs, a shot from the Arab positions struck her upon a weak spot. Her boiler had, indeed, been penetrated, and an explosion ensuing, six men were scalded, while the engines were rendered useless, and progress, accordingly, stayed. Under a galling fire, maintained for nearly eight hours, were the repairs to the boiler carried on, the machine guns being by no means idle during the process, until a ringing cheer announced that the damage had been made good, and the *Sofiyeh* could be brought into calmer waters. On the 4th February Sir Charles Wilson's party were rescued, and in much shorter time than had been consumed in making the island—protracted because of the difficulties in gathering wood for fuel—the *Sofiyeh* was back again at Abu Kru, safe from extremely perilous adventures.

As to Lord Cochrane, whom we left riding from the banks of the Nile, near Gubat, on the morning of the 1st February, he completed an extraordinarily smart ride over the desert, entering Korti late on the 4th.

That night the British Government received the mourn-

ful intelligence that Khartoum had fallen. The Ministry were incredulous, however. They refused to believe the spirit of the message transmitted from Lord Wolseley, and on the morning of the 5th they still doubted, as did likewise the departmental chiefs. And so the morning was rapidly vanishing into noon, when, the representative of one of the London dailies "scouting" round the War Office, heard of the dreadful message. This was sufficient for the reporter. Soon, very soon, the tidings of the fall of Khartoum, and the probable death of Gordon, were flashing along the telegraph wires to every newspaper office in the kingdom—America, the continent of Europe, and throughout the whole civilised world. The authorities at the Government Office were appealed to, and their evasive replies added to the force of the first shock. They would, they said, communicate with the Press when there was anything reliable to give; until then, nothing could be made known. The tale the electric wire had told could not, however, be withstood, and in the afternoon and evening of the 5th February civilization was ringing with the awful news. Little by little the story of the disastrous termination to hopes and fears had leaked out, the items were welded together and understood, and everyone stood aghast. Fain would the Government and the nation have disbelieved what was imparted, gladly would they have scorned the idea of such a calamity as was expressed, but the message at length published from the War Office was too circumstantial to be resisted. Might it not be that Sir Charles Wilson had reversed the steamer's engines too hurriedly? Ought he not to have penetrated further up the river? Omdurman, alone, perhaps had succumbed, and here it might be that the evidence of Arab victory was seen! No. Quickly these and other speculations were dispelled by constantly arriving telegrams from the Soudan, official and unofficial, no lingering gleam for doubt remaining that Khartoum had actually fallen.

But allowing that the Mahdi had become possessed of

Khartoum through execrable treachery, what reliance could be placed upon the report that Gordon was killed ? Here there was a strong ray of hope. According to one rumour the General had been shot dead immediately the traitor Feragh had thrown open the gates of Khartoum nearest Omdurman ; another report had it that Gordon had been stabbed ; a third that he, with a number of his followers, were still holding out in the fortified Catholic church ; and there was even a statement that being aware treachery was premeditated he had escaped, with a following, in the direction of the Equator and so escaped capture. Gordon was known to have a number of steamers in Khartoum. Sir Charles Wilson, who had by this time, the 10th or 12th February, arrived at Korti, and furnished additional particulars, had not mentioned steamers anchored in front of the Palace, and on this slender foundation, and a stray expression of Gordon in one of his early despatches, was built a theory that he had utilised them for escape. Then it was remembered that Gordon had emphatically declared that he would never leave the people of Khartoum until a settled government was established ; that, D.V., he would never be taken alive. This was more in keeping with the character, the integrity, and the bravery of Gordon, than the theory of escape by the southern gate. Accordingly, one by one, surmises were exploded and the hard, pitiless, agonising conviction forced itself upon the nation that Gordon had met a soldier's death, that he had died fighting, and found that release he had yearned for through years of suffering and untold cares.

At length all that was reliable was resolved into what is best told, perhaps, in a letter from Abu Kru, to the following effect :—Some months before Khartoum fell Gordon obtained proof that Faragh Pasha who commanded the Soudini troops at Khartoum, and on whom Gordon had literally heaped favours, contemplated treachery. He accused him of it, and brought it home

to him, but pardoned him on the promise of good behaviour, this pardon being politic, by reason of the great influence of the pasha with the troops. Faragh, however, seems to have thought that the pardon was only temporary in character, and that on the arrival of the English he would be punished, so he offered terms to the Mahdi. At first he could not get his price from Mohammed Ahmed, but the news of our victories at Abu Klea and Abu Kru, and of the reinforcements coming forward, induced the Mahdi to consent to agree to any terms. So on the 25th January, the rebels, by arrangement, assaulted and easily took the works at Omdurman, and on the other shore, including parts of the outlying defences of the city itself. But Gordon still felt safe. He had his parapet complete, and, at the worst, he had the Greek cathedral, which he used as his magazine, to fall back upon. At this time he does not appear to have suspected Faragh, for he did not remove him from his command, and the confidence was repaid at dawn of the 26th, when, without opposition, the Mahdi's troops entered the city, and a detachment proceeding to Gordon's house, met him as he was coming out, and, in spite of his vigorous defence, slew him there and then.

Miraculous that another Syrian, or Selucian, Huguenot, Cawnpore, or some such massacre has not to be recorded; but the astonishment vanishes in a degree when it is recollected that, practically, no opposition was extended to the advent of the Mahdi's troops. The most reliable accounts are unanimous in this, that the slaughter was limited to the heroic Gordon, his trusty soldiers, and those related to the men upon the steamers waiting near Metammeh, and that Mohammed, who has the credit of not being a cruel man, expressed his sorrow that in the outburst of passion Gordon was slain. The Mahdi did, as a fact, cause the execution of the treacherous wretch Faragh, a fate the unspeakable scoundrel richly merited.

Gordon had, in very truth, passed beyond the Veil; his

body had been the target for the False Prophet's marksmen, that wild startled rush from the Governor's residence the signal for instantaneous death. No more perambulations of the ramparts by night to see that all the sentries are properly posted, and on the alert, and to cheer by example and precept; no more pacings of that solitary chamber which should in reality have afforded this hero among heroes calm, refreshing sleep; no more regrets that the British or Zebehr had not come to relieve the city; no more appeals to Heaven that in His own good time, and when he, Gordon, could best be spared, he should be taken to eternal rest. Mentally, he had died a thousand times, yet in all his troubles he was patient, long-suffering, consoled by the thought of ecstatic bliss in a higher sphere:

No fears to beat away, no strife to heal;
The past unsigh'd for, and the future sure.

On that very 14th December Gordon reported on paper, "Khartoum all right; can hold out for years"—written, be it remembered, in this tone for fear the Mahdi should become possessed of the scrip—he had said that all was over, and that nothing short of absolute decease awaited him at any moment, it might be, any day, though he had reason to suppose it would be the 19th January—a week prior to its actual occurrence. But he was undaunted, as he ever was: "I am quite happy, and, like Lawrence, have tried to do my duty." These were his last words.

So many pæans have been sung on Gordon's life and character, so much has been written in his favour, that we need not add to what has been already said, except to remark that never will the memory of him fade, never will his name be blotted from the very first rank of Britain's noblest sons. Yet once more, how forcibly does Wordsworth's conception of the "Happy Warrior" apply to Charles George Gordon:—

Who is the happy Warrior ? Who is he
 Whom every man in arms should wish to be ?
 —It is the generous spirit, who, when brought
 Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought
 Upon the plan that pleased his childish thought ;
 Whose high endeavours are an inward light
 That make the path before him always bright ;
 Who, with a natural instinct to discern
 What knowledge can perform, is diligent to learn ;
 Abides by this resolve, and stops not there,
 But makes his moral being his prime care ;
 Who, doom'd to go in company with pain,
 And fear, and bloodshed, miserable train !
 Turns his necessity to glorious gain ;
 In face of those does exercise a power
 Which is our human nature's highest dower ;
 Controls them and subdues, transmutes, bereaves
 Of their bad influence, and their good receives.

* * * * *

'Tis, finally, the man, who lifted high,
 Conspicuous object in a nation's eye,
 Or left unthought of in obscurity,—
 Who with a toward, or untoward lot,
 Prosperous or adverse, to his wish or not
 Plays, in the many games of life, that one
 Where what he most doth value must be won :
 Whom neither shape of danger can dismay,
 Nor thought of tender happiness betray ;
 Who, not content that former worth stand fast,
 Looks forward, persevering to the last,
 From well to better, daily self-surpast.

* * * * *

And, while the mist is gathering, draws
 His breath in confidence of Heaven's applause :
 This is the happy Warrior ; this is he
 Whom every man in arms should wish to be.

Our task, such as it is, approaches completion. Khar-toum fallen, Gordon shot dead — “Hamlet” without Hamlet—it only remains for us to say that the events of the 26th January, 1885, changed the whole aspect of affairs. While the British Cabinet gave Lord Wolseley at once a *carte blanche* as to the future military operations in the Soudan, with the object of retrieving the lost fortunes of the eleventh hour—that hour when the cup of gladness was dashed from the eager lips—it became necessary to alter the plan of the campaign. Abu Kru,

Gubat, was evacuated; General Buller arrived with a battalion of the Royal Irish, just in time to conduct the desert column back upon Abu Klea, thence to fall back on the Gakdul Wells, the depressed force harassed still, and, ultimately, on Korti.* Moreover, the Nile column, which was to strike for Abu Ahmed and Berber, and join hands with General Stewart's men after they had occupied Metammeh and Shendy and relieved Gordon and the residents, civil and military, in Khartoum, was recalled also. The gallant Sir Herbert Stewart had died of his wounds before the retreat had well begun; able General Earle had paid with his life for his brilliant victory at Kirbeka—where in a rebel sheikh's saddle-bag was found ample proof of the Khartoum disaster in the form of a document in Arabic—and reports there were that the Bayuda steppe was swarming from the country from which the British had retired. These things, with renewed operations in the Eastern Soudan by the force, 12,000 strong, under Sir Gerald Graham, the dispersal of Osman Digna's hordes, and the rising against the Mahdi in Kordofan, would constitute matter for another volume.

As we indite these closing lines the smoke of battle is clearing away. Tokens are not wanting that Lord Wolseley's expeditionary force, in their summer quarters along the banks of the Nile, is preliminary only to permanent evacuation of the Soudan in favour of the plucky Soudini; that the Mudir of Dongola travelling to Cairo, and Lord Wolseley preceding him thither, form a cogent reason for believing that the Mudir is to be invested with greater responsibilities along a new frontier, and that the Red Sea littoral will henceforth be free from the incursions of Osman Digna and his fierce Hadendowa. Should the writing upon the wall be indeed prophetic, and the Mahdi allowed to rest undisturbed at Khartoum, no inconsiderable portion of the British nation

will heartily rejoice, although the remaining section will make their voices heard in loud and sustained protestations, convinced that English honour is stained so long as Khartoum is not re-taken and the False Prophet is supreme in the far-reaching Soudan.

THE END.

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